INTRODUCTION TO SIKHISM

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100 BASIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SIKH RELIGION AND HISTORY

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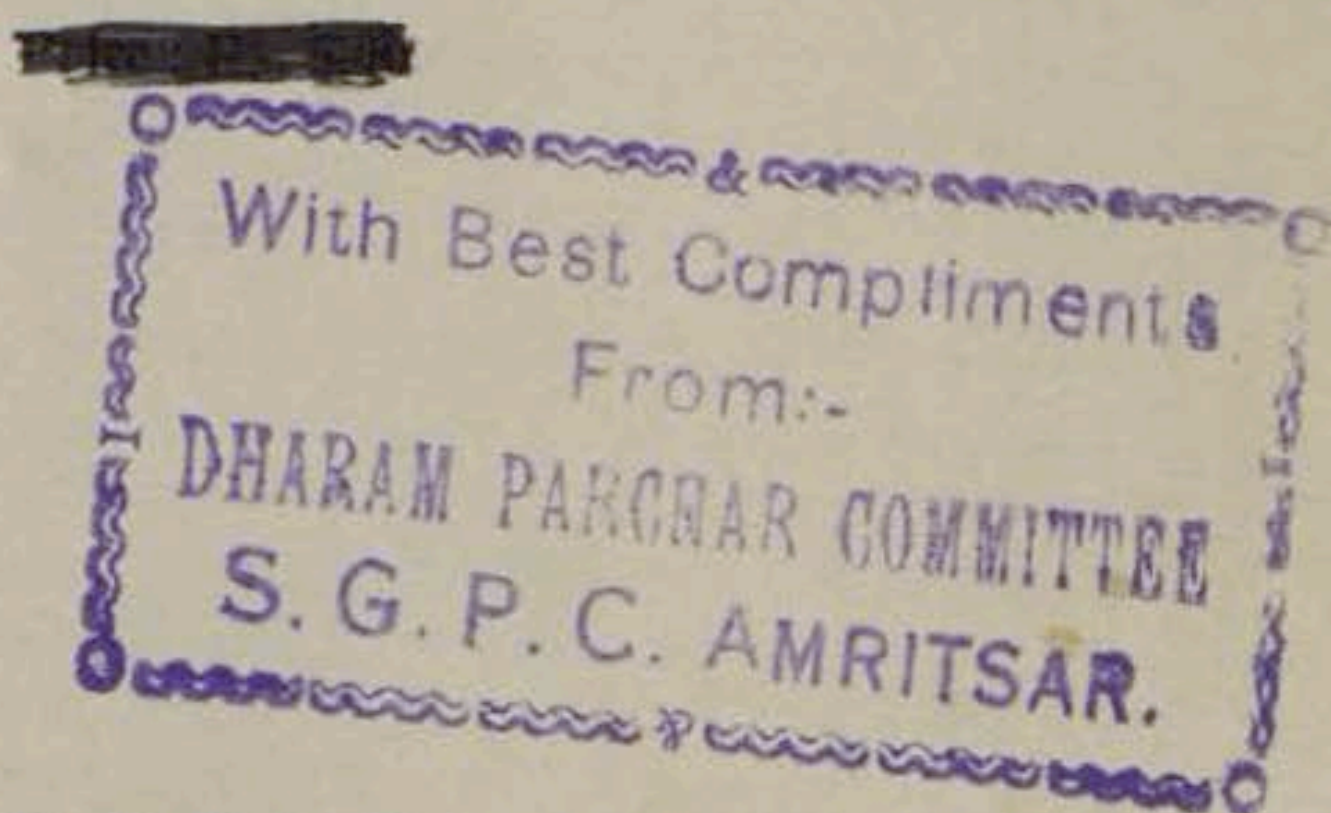
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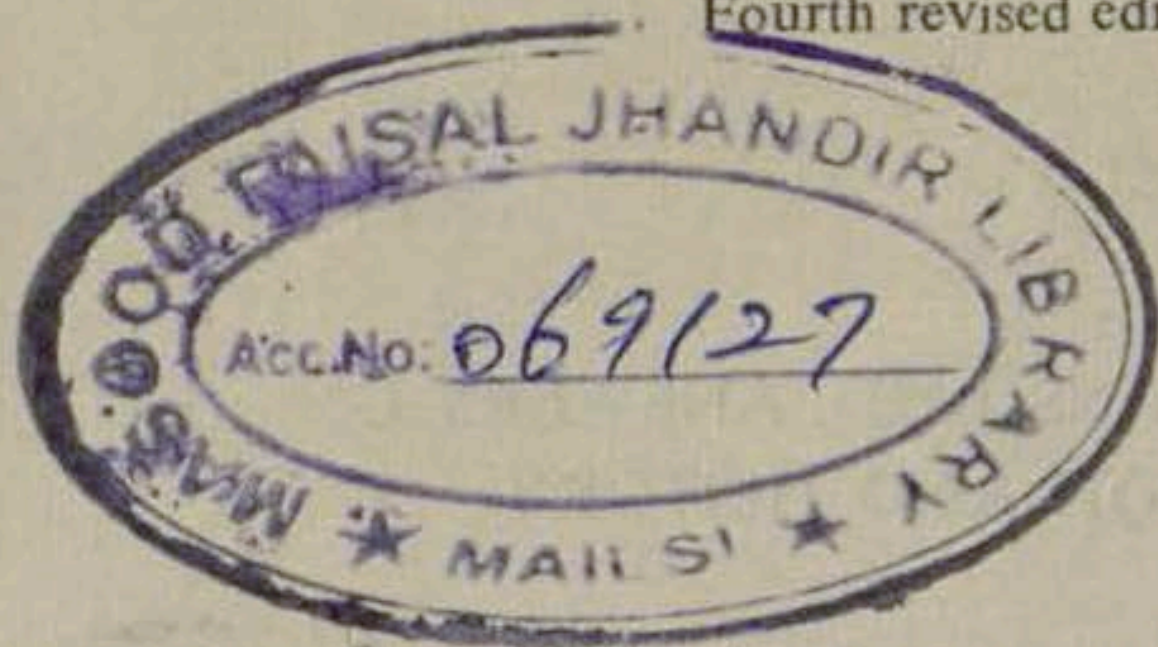
PREFACE

Eminent people of other faiths such as Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Professor Arnold Toynbee, to mention two, have paid tribute from time to time, to the noble ideals and principles of the Sikh religion and to our Gurus, but on the whole the world knows little about them. This is partly due to the fact that the number of Sikhs is comparatively small and also to the fact that it is not a proselytising religion and there has therefore been practically no missionary activity. Moreover, up to now, there has been comparatively little literature on the Sikh religion and the great Gurus who propagated it in any other language except Punjabi.

The world today needs to know about the Sikh religion and about Guru Nanak who preached the Gospel of universal brotherhood and love and about that great inspirer and leader of men, Guru Gobind Singh, who performed the miracle of creating out of a demoralised and defeated people the Khalsa who became the symbol of courage combined with high character, of self-sacrifice and invincibility in the struggle against tyranny. The world needs to know about this great religion because apart from its noble ideals and traditions, it is a thoroughly pragmatic religion to be lived, not in isolation away from the world, but in our daily lives while peforming the usual chores that are a part of that life.

Great power, it is said, corrupts greatly. This is borne out by the facts of history, both in the case of nations and of individuals. Today we are on the threshold of an age in which man's knowledge of the forces of nature and to some extent, his control of them, has brought to man power on a scale hitherto undreamt of. The great question of the day is : "Is this power to be used for good or for evil ?" In the answer to this question lies the future of the human race.

There is a growing consciousness throughout the world that this power may result eventually in the destruction of all life on our planet unless man finds some kind of spiritual base. Guru Nanak's Gospel that there is one God who is the Father of us all and that we are all brothers irrespective of caste, colour or creed is most pertinent in a world of conflicting nationalities and faiths. Indeed it is the very basis of democracy which most of the world is wedded to today. Service of our fellow human beings, fearlessness, in the struggle against any form of social or political tyranny and the willingness to sacrifice all in that struggle, which are the part of the Sikh traditions are also completely compatible with the democratic ideal. When there are added to all this, the great virtues of character, truth, sincerity, faith in the invincibility of man when he is fighting for truth and justice, you get the complete Man that the philosophy of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh visualised—Man in God's image.

It was fortunate that the occasions of the Tercentenary of Guru Gobind Singh, the Quincentenary of Guru Nanak Dev and the Tercentenary of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom brought forth a flood of literature on Sikhism and the lives of these great men and on the Guru Granth Sahib. This created interest in a wide public throughout the world in the noble principles and traditions of our faith.

Dr. Mansukhani's book is to be welcomed as a good contribution in this field. It makes available in language, easily understood by the ordinary layman, the basic principles of the Sikh Religion and the outstanding facts about the lives of our Gurus and their teachings. He has modestly called it an Introduction, but it is more than that. It contains much valuable information which should help to educate and enlighten people about a great faith and the Gurus who propagated it.

HARDIT SINGH MALIK
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4th July 1977

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I. General

1. What is religion ?

From times immemorial man has felt the need of some power or deity to liberate him from his toils and to protect him from dangers Further, he seeks to obtain peace and hope through contact with a superior power which is called Divinity.

Society and religion go together. Religion has occupied an important place in the history of civilisation and philosophy. It gives a meaning and purpose to human life and satisfies man's longing for peace and salvation. Some form of religion existed in primitive societies. They believed in spirits, magic and images of gods and offered sacrifice to them. The basic forms of religious expression are sacrifice, prayer and ritual.

Religion has been defined as "the relationship between man and the super-human power he believes in and depends upon". According to Jakob Burckhardt, "Religions are the expression of the eternal and indestructible metaphysical cravings of human nature." It includes a rule of conduct or principle of individual life on which one's peace of mind depends. Religions offer different paths to salvation. The goal of religion is getting in tune with the Infinite. Moreover, the philosophy of religion satisfies man's desire for inner happiness and life after death. The impulse toward religion is an integral part of human nature. True religion is neither ceremony nor ritual nor going to the temple, but an inner experience which finds God everywhere.

Religion consists of a number of beliefs relating to a reality which cannot be demonstrated by proof, but which is an inexorable certainty for the believer. This reality induces him to adopt certain modes of action and behaviour. When Guru Arjan was asked as to which is the best religion in the world, he answered : "The best religion in the world is the one which stresses the power of prayer and the performance of noble deeds."

2. What is the place of religion in the modern age ?

Throughout the ages, man has believed in some sort of religion. It is thought that without religion he cannot comprehend the real purpose of his existence. As a matter of fact, religion has had a definite place in society and will continue to play a vital part in this age of science.

While science and technology might assist man in improving his physical conditions, surroundings and economic standards, religion and ethics help to develop his personality and inner self. Man may live in comfort and prosperity and yet have no peace of mind. Even in a highly affluent society like that of the United States of America, it is realised that wealth and power are not everything. Real progress is intrinsic and shows itself in inner satisfaction and sense of fulfilment.

Moreover, modern society dominated by technology cannot be regarded as an ideal society. It suffers from great strains and a sense of frustration and futility. Science has brought man to the brink of total destruction of civilisation and the annihilation of the human race. It is religion alone that can save society from such a catastrophe and check the erosion of human values. It reinforces the basic values and discourages racial prejudice, economic exploitation and social injustice.

Religion like science is devoted to the service of man. Religion corrects the lopsidedness of science, because without moral and spiritual foundations, science is apt to bring ruination to mankind. Religion and ethics humanise the scientist and make him realise his social responsibility. It shifts the emphasis in science and industry from exploitation and power to social uplift, peace and co-operation. Man has to be the master and not the slave of machines.

Great scientists themselves realise the limitations of science They look to religion to remedy the social evils. According to Dr. Julian Huxley, "Religion of some sort is probably a necessity." One may not accept the dogmas of religion, but one must appreciate its search for truth and the endeavour for uplift of the masses.

3. Can I be happy without religion ?

Much depends on one's idea of happiness. True happiness is a state of mind in which man finds tranquillity and contentment. The external happiness conferred by material possessions and worldly activities is ephemeral and superficial. In Communist countries people may appear to be satisfied and contented as their material conditions improve, but can they really be said to have achieved true happiness and real peace of mind ?

Perhaps one of the reasons for the present-day decline in morals is the neglect of true religion. Without high ethical standards, which are the foundations of true religion, no organised and disciplined life is possible. Promiscuity and sexual aberrations are no doubt due to ignorance and neglect of the fundamental principles of ethics. In a secular State it is the duty of parents and voluntary organisations to impart to children the know-

ledge of moral and spiritual values and to make them noble. If a man who is under a strong temptation thinks that moral rules are man-made, he may easily violate them. He will hesitate much in transgressing them, if he believes that they are God-made, revealed to him through a Divine Teacher or the Guru.

Even men of piety and great devotion are apt to fall a prey to temptation. There are such notable examples as Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Joga Singh. If religion is not sincerely practised, it has little effect on our private lives or that of the community. A keen interest in religion makes people seek the company of holy men, which can give them the solace and happiness they really need.

Some people make a show of being religious. This does not serve any useful purpose. What is needed is a positive attitude, to seek the company and assistance of persons who are truly devoted to religion.

A few persons think that religion is an irrelevance, a matter of no consequence, and that they lose nothing if they exclude religion from their lives. They believe in the motto : 'Eat, drink, and be merry.' But does this give an edge or meaning to life ? Life has a purpose. Religion makes a man conscious of his spiritual heritage and goal.

4. Is fear the basis of all religions ?

In ancient times, it is true that the fear of the unknown and anger of gods and goddesses and the consequent punishment compelled people to believe in some sort of religion. They began to worship the forces of nature. In the Middle Ages, the Christian Church set up the Inquisition to punish the wrongs against the church. As man's knowledge increased, this fear was replaced by a conviction

that behind the universe was a Creator, who was just and merciful and not revengeful.

Fear is not always a bad thing. Fear of police and imprisonment makes many people abide by law. The fear of venereal diseases keeps many persons away from sexual indulgence. Fear of sickness has turned men's minds to research and the discovery of remedies for many chronic diseases and violent epidemics.

According to the new science of psychiatry, fear of any kind—particularly in the case of children—makes them nervous wrecks. Instead of telling people about penalties for moral wrong, they should appeal to their higher sense and the consideration of the social good. It is in the interest of religion itself to discourage such fear and to strengthen the sense of moral values and social conscience in the individual. The moral code ought to be a part of daily life and any breach should be regarded as an injury to society.

Sikhism does not encourage fear. It does not believe in the system of punishment or the inducement of a reward. In place of fear, it reinforces conviction in courage. It believes in optimism or victory.

Sikhism preaches that we should neither cause fright to anyone nor be afraid of anyone. This healthy spirit has been responsible for the Sikh's willingness to offer his life for the faith. True heroism is lack of fear and lack of hatred. The Sikh believes in the cause he serves, without any idea of reward or punishment.

In Sikhism, the awe of God turns into love. Just as a faithful wife is careful and cautious not to cause any annoyance to her husband, but rather keen on ministering to his comforts, in the same way, the true devotee is prepared to offer his all to please God and to serve His Creation.

5. What are the characteristics of Sikh Religion ?

Sikhism is a monotheistic faith. It recognises God as one without a second, who is not subject to time and space. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Destoyer of the universe.

Moreover in Sikhism, ethics and religion go together. The inculcation of moral qualities and the practice of virtue in everyday life is a vital step towards spiritual development. Qualities like honesty, compassion, generosity, patience, humility etc. can be built up only by special effort and perseverence. The lives of the Gurus show how they lived their lives according to the code of ethics.

Sikhism does not believe in *Avtarvada*, that God takes a human form. It does not attach any value to gods and goddesses and other deities.

The Sikh religion rejects all rituals and routine practices like fasting and pilgrimage and omens and austerities. The goal of human life is merger with God and it can be accomplshed by following the teaching of the Guru, by meditation on the Holy Name and performance of acts of service and charity.

Sikhism emphasis s *Bhakti Marg* or the path of devotion It does however recognise the limited value of *Gian Marg* (Path of knowledge) and *Karam Marg* (Path of Action). It also lays stress on the need of earnging God's grace for reaching the spiritual goal.

Sikhism is a modern, scientific and practical religion. It believes that normal family-life (*Grasth*) is no barrier to salvation. It is possible to live detached in the midst of worldly ills and temptations. The devotee must live in the world and yet keep his head above the usual tensions and turmoils. He must be a soldier, a scholar and a saint.

The Gurus believed that life has a purpose and a goal. It offers an opportunity for self-realisation and God-realisation. Moreover man is responsible for his

actions. He cannot claim immunity from the results of his action. He must therefore be very vigilant in what he does. Finally the Sikh Scripture (*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*) is the perpetual Guru. This is the only religion which has given the Holy Book the status of a religious preceptor, There is no place for a living human Guru (*Dehdhari*) in Sikh Religion.

6. What is the need and justification of the Sikh religion ?

The advent of Guru Nanak in 1469 served a socio-political necessity. India had fallen on evil days. There was no security of life and property.

Guru Nanak rang the alarm-bell and saved the masses from fake religion. Religion then was either a form of ritual or mere hypocrisy. He brought the people out of the old rut of formalism and parrot-like repetitions of scriptures. Guru Nanak challenged the division of men into classes, castes and communities. For him, all men were equal and worthy of respect.

Guru Nanak stressed the uniqueness of each individual and wanted him to progress through a process of self-discipline. The discipline was three-fold : physical, moral and spiritual. The physical discipline included acts of service and charity, while leading a householder's life; the moral discipline included righteous living and rising above selfish desires; the spiritual discipline included belief only in the One Supreme Being, the Timeless Almighty, to the exclusion of the Pantheon of gods and goddesses.

The Gurus taught a course of discipline to their Sikhs for a period of nearly 240 years till the creation of the Khalsa, the ideal man of the Tenth Guru.

Guru Nanak opposed political tyranny and subjugation.

He raised his voice against Babar's invasion and the tyrannical deeds perpetrated by his army in India. However, the imprisonment of Guru Nanak and the wonderful way in which he conducted himself and performed the tasks assigned to him in the camp awakened the soul of the Mughal invader. The guru emphasised the dignity of the individual and his right to oppose injustice and oppression. His main task, however, was to turn men's minds to God. Guru Nanak opposed mere ceremony and ritualism as dead wood. True religion is purposeful and conscientious living and not the tread-mill of ritual.

But for Guru Nanak, the lamp of spiritualism would have been extinguished in Asia.

7. What are the distinctive features of Sikhism ?

Each prophet gives some light and message to the world. Guru Nanak, the Founder of Sikhism and his nine successors made a distinct contribution to religion and religious thought. Sikhism may be distinguished from other religions from three stand-points : philosophy, community or institution, and physical appearance.

From the philosophical stand-point, the contribution of Sikhism may be called *Nam Marg*. Guru Nanak emphasised devotion to the Timeless Almighty. He mentioned the attributes of God in the *Mul-Mantra*. He asked man to dedicate himself day and night to the remembrance of God and His Name.

Secondly, the Gurus gave to their followers the form of a community, with certain institutions such as *Deg*, *Teg* and *Fateh*. By *Deg* is meant the system of Community Kitchen (*Langar*) maintained by contributions of the Sikhs. Everyone is to donate one-tenth (*Daswand*) of his income. *Teg*, the sword or *Bhagwati* represents power, which was necessary to preserve freedom of religious worship and to

end tyranny. For this reason, Guru Gobind Singh gave to God among other names, the name of *Sarabloh* (All Steel). The Sikh believes in *Fateh* or victory. His salutation is *Wah-guruji Ka Khalsa, Wah-guruji Ki Fateh*: the victory is of God and the Khalsa is of God. The Sikh always believes in *Chardi Kala* progress and optimism and in reform and improvement of society as a continuous process.

Thirdly, Sikhism believes in discipline. Guru Gobind Singh gave the Sikh a new appearance and administered to him the baptism of the sword, infusing in him a spirit of fearlessness and a belief in his invincibility and bade him keep the five symbols (*Kakars*) each beginning with the letter K.

Another tenet of Sikhism is humility (*Garibi*). The Gurus asked their followers to regard themselves servants of the *Sagant*. The tenth Guru, after administering the new baptism to the five chosen ones, asked them on bent knees and with folded hands to administer baptism (*Amrit*) to him. In the entire human history, there is no other case of a Guru kneeling before his followers.

8. Is Sikhism suited to the conditions of modern society ?

The principle of the survival of the fittest is applicable as much to religions as to communities or peoples. Those faiths which cannot meet the challenge of time and the new conditions in society are likely to suffer an eclipse.

However, it is obvious that Sikhism is suited to the needs of modern life. It believes in the individual and his right to the development of his personality to the maximum extent possible. According to Guru Nanak, every man has power or merit; he is a part of the divine. He is not a useless weakling, a mere product of the chain-reaction of Karma. The Sikh is essentially a man of action, with

an overwhelming sense of self-reliance. He, however, invokes the Guru's blessings at every step in his life and craves for Divine Favour or Grace.

Sikhism is also modern because it is rational. It does not foster blind faith. Guru Nanak exposed the futility of meaningless ritual and formalism. He questioned the superstitious practices of his Time and he brought about a revolution in the thinking of his people.

Sikhism rejects all distinctions of caste and creed and stands for the 'Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man'. It believes in a casteless, egalitarian society guaranteeing equal status to woman. At a time when woman was regarded inferior to man, Guru Nanak placed woman on a high pedestal: "Why call her inferior, who gives birth even to kings ?"

An important aspect of modern society is the belief in democracy. The welfare of man is best secured by his elected representatives. This principle is the guiding rule of the Khalsa, which entrusts all decisions to the elected Five Sikhs.

Sikhism also believes in the concept of a socialistic pattern of society. Man's responsibility to society lies in making his contribution to social welfare as his sacred duty. The gulf between the more fortunate and the less fortunate ones has to be bridged The Guru instituted the Temple of Bread (*Langar*) to break the caste system. This is a good example of true democracy in daily life.

Sikhism is thus distinct from other religions and has something new to offer to man.

9. Is Sikhism a faith of hope and optimism ?

Yes, the Gurus prescribed the sovereign remedy of the Name for the ills of mortals. While some religions condemn men as miserable sinners destined to damnation and

the unending fire of hell, Sikhism believes that there is hope even for the worst man. Koda the cannibal, and Sajjan the thug, were reclaimed to good life by Guru Nanak with the gift of *Nam*.

All is never lost. If man realises his mistakes and shifts the centre of his life from the lower self to the higher self, he can still attain the highest goal. But this change comes through the Guru's word (*bani*) and God's Grace. In moments of crisis, even the most pious and virtuous of men may succumb to temptation. Undoubtedly, evil and sorrow test the mettle of man, but his true support through all his trials is faith in God and prayers for His Grace.

Sikhism is a practical religion. It shows mankind how to live a worthy and useful life in the world. It teaches him how to face and overcome evil. With selfless service, devotion to duty, Guru and God, man can work his way to self-realisation. He trusts in God,feels that He is with him, and that He will guide him to his goal. When a Sikh has to face trials and tortures and everything seems lost, he prays for Divine guidance from his scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, and bears all difficulties with faith and fortitude. *Gurbani* affords him true solace and enables him to accept the Divine Will (*Hukam*) patiently. He prays in a spirit of dedication and not with expectation of any reward. A true Sikh never despairs even in the most adverse circumstances. He feels that he is in the company of the Guru, which gives him strength and he faces every crisis with courage and unshakable faith in God and the Guru.

Sikhism is suited to the challenges of the modern age. Mr. Bunker, ex-ambassador of USA to India, once said : "Cardinal principles of Sikhism are very much akin to my own religion. It is the religion of our time."

As pointed out by Dr. Arnold Toynbee, "In the coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scripture the *Adi Granth*, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world."

10. How does a Sikh reconcile himself to the secular ideal ?

Sikhism recommends an active life—the life of a householder—*Grihst*—life in society, not in isolation, where every individual makes his contribution to the development of society. There is no place for asceticism in Sikhism. Every Sikh must work for his living, and not be a burden on society. Sikhism lays emphasis on the right type of living—*Dharma-di Kirt* (the labour of *Dharma*). Worldly duties may be performed side by side with the search of Truth. A Sikh must set an example to others; he should become a better farmer, a better businessman and a better public servant He is not to shun material gain or the comforts of life :

"Salvation is not incompatible with laughing,

Eating, playing and dressing well."

Sikhism lays emphasis on man's social obligations. Man is a part of society and has to work for its uplift. That is why social reform is a strong Point in the Guru's teaching. The Gurus rejected the caste system, untouchability, taboos against women, good and bad omens and the worshipping of graves, idols and mausoleums. Sikhism believes in the equality of man which is practically demonstrated through the institution of *Langar*—the Temple of Bread, dining together in a single line or *Pangat*, through inter-caste marriages and mixing on equal terms with persons of diverse faiths and nationalities. As stated by Dr. Gokul Chand Narang : "the appearance of Guru Nanak was a great step towards arousing consciousness of a common nationality."

Sikhism lays stress on one's duties as a citizen, rendering service to the community as a whole. The sword is meant not merely for protecting him, but also all victims of tyranny. Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice for preserving Hinduism from Aurangzeb's fanatical crusade is yet

another aspect of the right of freedom of religion, which is so necessary in a secular set-up. Secularism means equality of all religions, without special favour to the religion of the majority or designating any faith as State Religion.

Thus belief in Sikhism is compatible with the ideal of a secular democracy.

11. What is the contribution of Sikhism to the uplift of woman ?

When Guru Nanak appeared on the Indian scene, the place assigned to woman was low and unenviable. The tyranny of caste had left its marks on Hindu women. They had resigned themselves to their miserable lot. A widow had to burn herself on her husband's funeral pyre to become a *Sati*. The position of Muslim women also was far from satisfactory. A Muslim male could lawfully marry four women, who were regarded chiefly as objects of sexual gratification. Women were kept within *Purdah* and their education and movements were restricted.

The Sikh Gurus gave women equal status. They gained social equality and religious freedom. The false notion that they were inherently evil and unclean was removed.

Sikhism conferred religious rights on women. Some Hindu scriptures had allowed an inferior position to women, and affirmed that they were unworthy of performing religious worship. A woman was regarded as temptation-incarnate. The lot of a widow was deplorable. The Gurus exposed the folly of such notions. They rehabilitated woman in Indian society. Religious gatherings and *Kirtan* were thrown open to women; they could participate fully in religious ceremonies and receive the baptism (*Amrit*)

on equal terms with men. Guru Amar Das deputed some women for missionary work. Guru Hargobind called woman 'the conscience of man'. In religious gatherings, men and women sang and preached, without any distinction.

Guru Amardas condemned the practice of female infanticide and *Sati*. Guru Teg Bahadur blessed the women of Amritsar and said that by devotion they had made themselves "acceptable to God". Sikh history furnishes names of many women who inspired men to heroic deeds. The "forty immortals" were put to shame by their womenfolk on their betrayal of the Tenth Guru, and thus goaded to action they welcomed martyrdom and earned pardon of the Guru. In the Indo-Pak conflict (1971), Sikh women on the border formed the second line of defence and gave valuable assistance to our fighting forces.

12. How has martyrdom helped Sikhism ?

No nation, sect or community can survive and prosper unless it has a band of persons who can die for upholding its faith, integrity, unity, its traditions and way of life. That is what the history of the world demonstrates clearly.

The essential condition for entry into the Sikh fold is self-surrender and devotion to the Guru and God. Readiness for the supreme sacrifice or holding one's head on the palm of one's hand for offering it to the Guru is an essential condition laid down by the Gurus for becoming a Sikh. Seeking death not for personal glory or winning reward or going to heaven, but for the purpose of protecting the weak and the oppressed is what has made the Khalsa brave and invincible. This has become a tradition of the Khalsa. Right from the times of the Gurus till the last Indo-Pakistan conflict (1971), the Sikhs have demonstrated that death in the service of truth, justice

and country is a part of their character and their glorious tradition. They do not seek martyrdom, they attain it. Dying is the privilege of heroes. It should, however, be for an approved or noble cause. Sikh history furnishes outstanding examples of Guru Arjan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, sons of Guru Gobind Singh and countless Sikhs who laid down their lives for upholding religious freedom and uprooting tyranny.

Undoubtedly, in a world full of evil and sin, men of God must be prepared to suffer for the cause of righteousness and truth. According to Guru Gobind Singh, the true hero is one who fights to uphold truth. He does not run away from the battlefield.

Martyrs face the gallows with a smile. The greatest tortures hold no terror for them. They look at the executioner with equanimity because they believe in the justness of their cause. A true martyr regards himself as God's instrument. Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was unique. He sacrificed himself not to save any of his followers but to save Hindu *Dharam*. Sikh history is replete with the glorious deeds and the heroic sacrifices of the Sikhs who suffered for upholding decency, truth and justice.

13. Does Sikhism insist on faith ?

When we repose our trust in some one it means that, we have faith in him. For instance, when we send a child to school, it is on account of our faith in the value of education. In the matter of love, one has to put faith in the beloved. So faith is not peculiar to religion; it is found in almost every activity of life.

Sikhism insists on this kind of basic faith. Just as you cannot learn swimming unless you get into water, in the

same way, you can never know spirituality unless you believe in God. Sikhism enjoins faith in the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of Man.

Secondly, Sikhism emphasises the need of Guru for spiritual training. Fortunately, *Adi Granth* is with us for such guidance. Many persons seek the solution of their spiritual and temporal problems in the granth and seek light from *Gurbani.* We thus repose our faith in the Guru, and we discover the great truths enshrined in his message and the wisdom and value of acting in the light of what *Gurbani* tells us.

Thirdly, Sikhism enjoins love of God. We cannot love God if we love ourselves. The ego is at the root of all evil and our sufferings. If we concentrate our minds on God and sing His praises, we subordinate and even drive the ego out of our minds and acquire those great qualities and virtues, which we associate with God.

Fourthly, Sikhism believes in universal good. The Sikh seeks the Lord's Grace not only for himself but also for the whole world; he believes in the good of all mankind (*Sarbat da bhala*). This sense of fellowship makes him feel at home everywhere and to look on all as friends : "No one is my enemy or a stranger," Guru Nanak wrote. He thus acquires an optimistic outlook on life.

The need of faith is recognised even by the greatest scientist. Indeed, reason alone cannot fathom the mysteries of existence and the universe. Guru Nanak says : "The intellect cannot grasp what is beyond the bounds of intellect. Rise above limited human consciousness and you will know of God and His works." Atomic energy and nuclear power have further strengthened the scientists' belief in the unlimited powers of Nature and Providence.

14. What is the role of reason in Sikhism ?

Reason and faith are complementary. They operate in different spheres, though each is sovereign in its own field. Reason has certain limits. Faith is necessary in certain basic things, as for example, the existence of God, or the need of assistance of the Guru. Reason operates in specified fields, as for example, when a man shall pray and what actions he may do. Religion does not exclude the operation of the intellect, though it certainly acts as a delimiting factor.

Guru Nanak challenged the superstitious practices and rituals of his age. He quetioned the value of offering food and water to one's dead ancestors or of the idea that child-birth causes impurity or again that eatable things should be cooked within encircled space made sacred by plastering it with cow-dung. He employed the touchstone of reason to test their truth and proved them false. He appealed to men to accept reason as their guide in all such matters.

However, spiritual realisation is beyond the ken of reason. On the other hand, great scientists of the world have accepted the higher truths revealed by religion. Man is an imperfect creature and his faculties and powers are limited. He is unable to comprehend the ultimate Reality unaided. He needs the assistance of a religious leader or Guru whose divine knowledge and wisdom can guide him to his spiritual goal.

Science continues to make new discoveries and inventions which, not unoften, rejects theories of previous scientists. Could man 10 years ago consider it feasible to orbit through space or land on the moon ? What may be regarded as a miracle at one time may become a fact later.

The theory of Karma is based on reason—the logic of cause and effect. This means that in order to ensure a

good and bright future, man should perform good actions. How can man expect good out of evil actions ?

Perhaps it would be best to have a recourse to reason when faith—blind faith—proves of no avail. But where reason is obviously not applicable, we must rely on faith. This is particularly true of spiritual matters.

15. What is the place of morality in Sikh religion ?

It is argued that one can be moral without belief in religion. There are many people in various parts of the world, generally in Communist countries, who may not believe in God and yet they are good citizens, kind and useful members of society.

All the same it is generally recognised that religion is a great aid to morality. Man is subject to temptation. Though he is born with certain good potentialities, the temptation of evil is so strong that without some moral background and religious convictions, he may easily succumb to it. In such moments of difficulty, when he is likely to be overcome by evil, the Guru, or a true spiritual leader will give him guidance and courage in resisting it.

Ethics and morality are the very bases of Sikhism. Evolution of the spirit is not possible without righteous conduct and adherance to social morality. Guru Nanak emphasises this point :

"Greater than Truth is Truthful living."

The Sikh follows personal ethics like telling the truth, gentle speech, fair play, service, humility and tolerance. Morality cannot be an end in itself. It is an aid to the evolution of spiritual life. Sin is a definite obstacle on the path of Divinity.

Immorality is something of which one is ashamed or which one does in secret. The morality of Sikhism is based on the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. Service of God is service of his Creation. Acts of love and charity—even self-sacrifice—are not religious deeds in the strict sense of the term, but they are definitely helpful in preparing the ground for the elimination of egoism. They show our love of humanity and love of God.

Sikhism believes that this is a just and moral world. Though some bad people may seem to thrive, sooner or later, they will have their punishment. God is a strict judge and He treats people according to their deserts. Guru Nanak says :

"According to their actions, some get near to God and some distant."

But like any good judge, God is charitable too and tempers mercy with justice.

16. What is the place of sword in Sikhism ?

No faith can survive unless it can defend itself. Sikhism was born in a hostile atmosphere and had to face a lot of persecution. In addition to giving Sikhs lessons in the art of daily living, the Gurus gave Sikhs power to uphold their beliefs. For this reason Guru Hargobind donned two swords : One of spiritual leadership and the other of temporal power. He was the first Guru to throw a challenge to the Moghul power and waged a war against the cruel and corrupt administration. His disciplined soldiers were successful against the Moghul armies in three battles. Guru Hargobind popularised the cult of the sword for purposes of defence and justice.

In a similar situation, after the martyrdom of Guru

Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh took up arms against Emperor Aurangzeb. He justified the use of force as the only means of survival. He wrote in *Zafarnama* :

"When the affairs are past other remedies,

It is justifiable to unsheath the sword."

Where goodness and sacrifice cannot avail, violence has to be met by violence. Undoubtedly, in certain circumstances there are exceptions to the practice of non-violence.

The carrying of the sword or *Kirpan* may perhaps be questioned in the atomic age. In the present world it continues to be a symbol of power, as it has been in the past. On ceremonial occasions, practically all armies in the world wear it. Its carrying reminds one of belief in one's own self and therefore it creates self-confidence. Even Gandhiji justified the use of violence for a high purpose. The Sikh sword is a symbol of self-respect, prestige and independence. Guru Gobind Singh hailed it as a saviour and protector of saints and the oppressed.

The sword is one of the compulsory symbols of the *Khalsa.* The Khalsa is ever ready in his uniform to protect the weak and suffer for a just cause. Guru Gobind Singh demonstrated in a practical way that the sword can be reconciled with spirituality. Goodness without the means to sustain and activate itself will fail to survive. Thererfore, it is right to say that the sword holds a very important place both in the history and philosophy of the Sikhs.

17. Should we teach our religion to our children ?

Some people, purely for psychological reasons, would not like to acquaint their children with any religion. They think that the child must grow up and then form his own

ideas and select his own religion. They would neither give any religious instruction nor moral training. This is not the right attitude, for the children in their formative years are denied the vital direction they need. Otherwise, like wild plants, their growth will be arbitary and undisciplined. As children, they must ask questions and if they are not satisfied or receive vague replies, they feel that something is wanting. They thus grow up in a spiritual haze. The idea that when they grow up they will select a suitable moral code or spiritual guide does not work. Neither they will have the time nor the opportunity to do any thinking or searching for themselves.

Undoubtedly, children have a right to the best their parents possess in all phases of life, including religion. If the parents are Sikhs, they must make efforts to bring the truths of Sikhism and the noble ideals of the Gurus to the notice of their children. In the *Rahat Nama* of Bhai Desa Singh, Guru Gobind Singh called upon the Sikhs to bring up their children in the Sikh faith and give them Sikh baptism. To deprive children of religious instruction is to deny them the assistance that the teachings of the Gurus give in leading noble lives. This will also mean that the vacuum in the child's mind will remain unfilled and he will continue to live in a state of uncertainty and moral ignorance. It is better to provide him with some moral ideas rather than none.

Let us make a more positive approach to the problem. It is not enough to encourage the social instincts of children. This may help in a limited way to make them realise that social instincts should have preference over selfish intincts, but temptations in life are so sudden and strong, that mere social responsibility will not be of much avail. A strong moral foundation is necessary to withstand the onslaught of evil ideas or bad company.

It is meaningful and rewarding to tell children of the moral support of the Gurus and the assistance they will

receive if they follow their ethical code.

18. What is the role of religion in human life with special reference to Sikhism ?

The goal of human life according to some is the attainment of perfection, and according to others, it is the acquisition of happiness. Pleasure-seeking and fleeting joys should not be mistaken for happiness. Religion is the key to real happiness because it produces harmony by an integrated development of human personality and control of impulses, desires and thoughts. But there can be no rigid approach to a human being because the problems of each individual are peculiar. Religion has to be flexible to suit the need of individual development.

Religion is the realisation of the divinity within oneself while leading a normal life. If divinity, progress and truth are not realised in human existence, the very purpose of man's life is defeated. True religion implies search of truth and flexibility in the individual approach to spiritual matters. Myths, forms and systems have fossilised religion and destroyed the truth and vitality in it.

Guru Nanak felt that the spiritual development should not be crushed by outward symbols and forms. To bind the soul on the wheels of a socio-religious machinery is a type of spiritual slavery. Freedom of the soul is vital for its adjustments to the needs of life and the complexity of social organisation. Constant adaptation is necessary for the achievement of harmony between the individual and the Supreme Being. Man's nature is extremely complex and it is suicidal to chain it to a rigid groove or pattern.

Guru Nanak discarded all prevalent superstitions, forms of worship and symbols. He pointed out the absurdity of idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness and pilgri-

mage. He challenged the use of intoxicants and smoking, and the practice of *Sati* and infanticide. At the same time, he advocated the practice of ethical values in daily life: justice, truth, honesty, humility, fearlessness and gratitude. These qualities make a man a true citizen of the world.

The universality of Guru Nanak's teaching makes an individual approach possible. Guru Nanak says :

"God ! Save by Your Grace this world which is in flames; Save it by whatever way it can be saved."

II. God and His Universe

19. Can we prove the existence of God ?

The existence of God cannot be proved in a scientific way by means of observation, experiment and verification. This type of proof is possible only in the field of physical phenomena.

There are two types of evidence—direct and indirect. Indirect proof is based on probabilities and circumstances. Men are hanged on the basis of circumstantial evidence. The existence of God can be proved on the basis of circumstantial evidence and the testimony of saints and prophets.

God cannot be known through the five senses. Just as there is the electro-magnetic wave which cannot be seen, heard, tasted, and touched and yet it carries sound through the wireless, in the same way. God's existence is inferred, though it cannot be demonstrated.

Moreover, the personal testimony of saints who have realised God may be accepted, as a large percentage of our knowledge is second-hand and there is little that we know through direct experience.

The existence of the universe and the design or pattern behind it make people feel that it could not have just happened, but that there is a sort of Creator. Just as a big mansion cannot be built without a master-builder or architect, in the same way, the universe must have been created by a Master-artist.

The consciousness of a moral sense within the individual is also an indication of some moral order of the universe.

We know that truth is better than a lie, love better than hate. Where did these beliefs come from ? They are an indication of the Creator who requires respect for these values in life. The Sikh Gurus never felt the need of proving the existence of God. They regarded Him ever-present, not in theory but in fact. Guru Nanak thought Him visible and manifest.

Modern scientists and thinkers have come to realise the existence of a power or "the moving hand", which designs and controls the phenomena of Nature. The pattern of the universe and the regularity of the laws behind its working confirm belief in the Lord of the universe.

20. What do we know of God ?

Guru Nanak describes the attributes of God in the *Japji* : "There is but one God. His name is True and Everlasting. He is the Creator, Fearless and without Enmity, the Timeless Form, Unborn and Self-existing."

Sikhism rejects the theory of incarnation. God does not take birth. He is self-existent and not subject to time; He is eternal; He can be realised through the grace of a spiritual guide or Guru, but such a guide must be perfect.

Sikhism believes in a personal God. The devotee is like a bride yearning for union with the husband and waiting at his pleasure to do his bidding. He is a beautiful person with charming eyes, sparkling teeth, a shrap nose, luxurious hair, with a gait like a peacock's and speech like music.

The Gurus have called God by different names—*Ram*, *Rahim*, *Allah*, *Pritam*, *Yar*, *Mahakal*. There is no such thing as a God of the Hindus and a God of the Muslims.

There is one God who is a presence, and is called *Wahguru* (The Lord of Wonder).

Is God transcendental or immanent ? He is both. He is present in all things and yet they do not cover His limitless expanse. When God is seen through the universe, we think of Him as *Sargun* (quailty-ful); when we realise His transcendence, we think of Him as *Nirgun* (abstract). Truly speaking, God is both in and above the universe. God is the whole and the world a part of that whole.

A complete knowledge of God is impossible. Guru Nanak says, "Only one who is as great as He, can know Him fully." We can only have some glimpses of Him from His works. The universe is His sport in which He takes delight. The world is a play of the Infinite in the field of the finite.

By His order, all forms and creatures came into existence. It is the duty of man to study the laws of the universe and to realise the greatness and glory of the Supreme Being. He has created an infinite number of worlds and constellations. The world in which we live is a small atom as compared to other worlds. Scientists like James Jeans, Hoyle and Narlikar have confirmed this theory.

21. Can we not do without belief in God ?

They are atheists who deny the existence of God. They are in a way free from moral rules and the stings of conscience. However, the atheist finds no meaning and purpose of life. He misses the inspiration and consolation of religion. He misses the companionship of God and Guru, and has nothing to hope for.

Yet there are agnostics who are not certain about God,

because they do not wish to get 'involved'. They fear that religion may entail austerity and sacrifice. Such people regard religion as a gamble and are not perpared to take the plunge.

In Sikhism, the belief in the existence of God is a must. The disciple has a feeling that God is knowable, but is not known to him. It is for him to study the scripture, to follow the instructions of the Guru and learn about God. For a thorough knowledge, serious effort and steadfast devotion are necessary.

Moreover, belief in God turns men's minds to His qualities : love, justice, charity, mercy, peace, wisdom, truth, goodness and beauty. When we meditate on His qualities, we imbibe imperceptibly some of these traits. Throughout the ages, prophets, have given their concepts of the Creator. To the Christians, God is revealed as Trinity : God, His son Jesus and the Holy Ghost. The Hindus accept the theory of incarnation and affirm that God appears in human form to save the world at the times of crisis, Islam believes in one God who gave his message to Mohamed, the prophet. The Sikh Gurus emphasise the unity of God. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer.

Undoubtedly, you can live without belief in God. You can inflate your ego. But man's spirit will remain stunted and starved. You can develop the spirit only through spirituality, which, in other words, means devotion to God.

22. Can we reconcile the existence of a merciful God with the problem of pain in the world ?

Undoubtedly, the world is full of evil and misery. Look at the many wars, slave-raids, torturings, concentration-

camps, atomic attacks. Do they not show that man, in spite of his decent exterior, is worse than a wild beast ?

Moreover, the problem of pain and suffering seems to be rooted in creation. We find one species of animal or fish feeding on another. Think of the epidemics and plagues. Everything is subject to disease and decay. Earthquakes are due to a 'fault' in the earth's crust. These, in addition to the eruption of volcanoes, cause a great loss of human life and property. Some calamities like famines and floods can be prevented by human ingenuity. We should not blame God for such calamities.

On the other hand, the world contains many lovely things : sunshine, flowers and fruits. The picnic-spots in the hills, the splendour of the sunrise and the sunset show that this world is full of beauty. Farid says, "The world is a beautiful garden."

God's purpose in creating the universe is to watch the game, to see how men and women behave in different circumstances. He has given man reason and some freedom. Man may do good or evil. All his acts are recorded and he gets reward or punishment accordingly.

Sikhism believes in a just, nay merciful God. God does not on His own cause suffering : "The Creator takes no blame to Himself." Though all things work under His law, He does not normally undermine His own law by making exceptions. Man sows the seed of action and gets the fruit accordingly. God is like a supreme judge who deals with people according to their deserts. It is also His privilege to pardon an erring but repentant soul. A deep study of the problem of pain makes us feel that pain has a good and useful purpose to serve. It draws out great kindness and pity in this hard world. Pain is also a test, an ordeal to assess man's conviction and courage. According to Guru Nanak, "Pain is a remedy, while pleasure is a disease." Physically, pain is an index of ill-health, a kind of alarm-bell. When you feel pain,

you must consult the doctor. So God gives you a timely warning.

23. What was God's purpose in creating man ?

It may not be possible to understand fully God's purpose in creating man, but prophets have told us something about man's goal. It is generally accepted that God's purpose is that man should realise his divine inspiration through his mortal frame.

God made man in His own image. He put His divine spark in man which is called the soul. The soul enters bodily forms according to individual's actions. The wall of the ego separates the soul from God. This leads to the cycle of birth and death. This metempsychosis can be ended by meditation and divine grace.

God is not a cruel monster out for sport with mortals. On the contrary, He is like a benevolent father. He gave man the best start in life by providing him with all the needs for his upkeep at the time of birth. Just as the body is sustained by food and drink, in the same way the soul is nourished by virtue and devotion. When the soul progresses with the performance of good deeds and the remembrance of the Name, it becomes worthy of merger in Divinity.

Man is the focal point of the universe. He is the crown of creation—the final stage. Human life is a starting point for God-realisation. You cannot merit salvation as an animal or stone. Therefore, human life offers a grand opportunity for spiritual attainment.

Man is made of spirit and matter : *Shiv* and *Shakti.* The spirit is subtle, while the body is gross. The body has to be cared for, because it houses the soul. A householder's life is the best life because it offers scope for acts

of charity and social service. Escapism or asceticism is not advocated by Sikh religion.

Life may be compared to a game of chess or playing cards. The individual does not frame the rules or control the game. The cards are given to him; it is upto him to play the game nicely or badly, wisely or foolishly. God is watching him and will reward him according to his deserts.

In the ultimate analysis, human life is a rich gift not to be frittered away in frivolities. If one fails here, one has to go through the cycle of 8.4 millions of births and deaths. It is man's duty to save himself from this long chain of transmigration.

24. Is the worship of God necessary ?

God does not insist that we worship Him. In His generosity, He gives to all—the high and the low, the educated and the illiterate—even those who are anti-God.

Some people are under the wrong impression that God, just like an army commander demands respect and worship. God does not need man's flattery or praise. Guru Nanak says : "If all people start praising Him, it will not make the least difference in His greatness." Just as the sun does not need light of lamps, in the same way, God does not need the praises of men.

God is not a Dictator. People worship Him from a sense of duty—*Dharma*. They are convinced that God who made the universe can be known and loved. Those who know His nature and qualities are wonder-struck by His greatness. In their ecstasy, they exclaim "*Wahguru*", the Wonderful Lord. They want to love Him as devotedly as a wife loves her husband.

Moreover, many people feel that human life is a grand

opportunity for spiritual attainment. A worldly man who makes no efforts towards spirituality stands in great of the cycle of birth and death.

A sense of spirituality is the sheet-anchor of the individual. It gives a purpose and meaning to life. Guru Arjan writes in *Sukhmani*, "The seed of Lord's Divine knowledge is in every heart." Thus the sense of emptiness is replaced by a sense of richness. Only those who are egoistic and wallow in their material possessions refuse to accept the comfort of divinity.

Man is not potentially evil, but he is weak. When temptation faces him, he is likely to succumb to it. At that moment, he needs a support, an inspiration. If he remembers his divine essence and screws up his moral courage, he will get the necessary strength to overcome the temptation.

A positive approach to God will yield results. God is our goal, so are His great qualities—Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Love, Purity, Peace, Wisdom, Justice, Mercy etc. By concentrating on these qualities, we, by a process of auto-suggestion, imbibe such qualities. Man rises to God, while God stoops to lift man.

25. How was the world created, according to Sikhism ?

God existed all alone in His abstract form—*Nirgun*—before He created the Universe. This may be called the state of precreation. God was in the state of *sunn samadhi*. According to Guru Nanak, there was darkness and chaos for millions of years. There were mists and clouds. None existed except God. Guru Nanak says :

"There was darkness for countless years.

There was neither earth nor sky; it was His Will.

There was neither day nor night, neither sun nor moon.

He (God) was in deep meditation.

There was nothing except Himself.

Then God willed the creation of the universe. He became manifest. *Sargun*. He diffused Himself in Nature. Guru Nanak says : "Thou created all Thy universe to please Thyself, to enjoy the spectacle, the reality, which is the light of Thy own Reality-self."

When was the world created ? This is a mystery. Was this process of creation a sudden and impulsive one or was it one of evolution and growth ? Only God who created it knows it. Like the spider, God spun Himself into a web. A day will come when He will destroy that web and once again become His sole self.

The *Prakriti* of three attributes – *Gunas* (*Rajas*, *Tamas*, *Satav*) was created by God. *Maya*, attachment and illusion are also His creation : Guru Gobind Singh writes :

"He created the Shakti of three *Gunas*

The great *Maya* is His shadow."

Out of the five subtle essences—*Sabda* (Sound) *Sparas* (Touch), *Rupa* (Sight), *Rasa* (Taste) and *Gandha* (Smell) arise five gross elements : ether, air, fire, water and earth respectively.

The universe is not an illusion—*Maya*. It is a reality—not final and permanent—but a reality on account of the presence of God in it.

This world is the abode of the Almighty and yet He transcends it.

26. What is the concept of Truth in Sikhism ?

The concept of Truth—*Sach*, *Sat*—is basic and fundamental in Sikhism. In the *Japji* Guru Nanak deals with the subject of Truth. The word "Truth" has different

meanings in different contexts. The most important connotation of Truth is God. The Almighty is Truth (*Sat Kartar, Sat Nam, Ad Sach, Jugad Sach, Hai Bhai Sach, Nanak Hosi Bhi Sach, Ap Sach Keenay Sabh Sach*). Another meaning of Truth is Virtue (*Apay Gun, Apay Gunkari*) which includes qualities like honesty, righteousness, justice, compassion, detachment, humility etc. The third meaning of Truth is : pure, holy, Sacred. (*Sacha Chauka Surat Ki Kar*). The fourth meaning of Truth is that which is correct and proper (*In Kuch Karay Sat Kar Man*). The fifth meaning of Truth is eternal happiness or bliss (*Tatah Tut Milay Sach Paya*).

But who can give the Truth ? God being the source of Truth gives truth (revelation) direct to the holy and the enlightened (*Jis Tu Seh Tis Milay Sach, Ta Tim Sach Kamaiya*). Secondly the Satguru (or Guru) can give Truth to the devotee through his teaching and example (*Satguru Milay Sach Paya, Jini Wichan Ap Gavaiya*). Thirdly the Sadh Sangat or Holy congregation can impart an understanding of Truth to the disciple (*Sadh Sangat Pavah Sach Dhana*). So God, Guru or Holy Congregation can grant the gift of Truth to a devotee.

The gift of Truth comes to the deserving. The Sikh must satify some requirements to be a candidate for the gift of Truth. He must, follow the Guru's teaching; he must do charitable and altruistic deeds; he must submit to the will of God; he must do spiritual cleansing through remembrance of the Holy Name (*Mun Doveh Shabad Lagan Har sin Rahau Chit Laai*); finally he must pray for God's grace (*Joh Prasad tu Pavah Sach, Ray Mun Meray Tu Ta Siu Raach*).

In Sikhism greater than Truth is Truthful living. One must lead a life of Truth. He must speak the Truth, act the Truth and Think the Truth (*Sach Karni Sach Taki Rahat*). A noble character implies the practice of humility, compassion, meditation and a desire to serve and guide

others on the spiritual path. Such a devotee earns the gift of Truth and ultimately merges with Eternal (God) like the rain drop losing itself in the ocean.

27. What happens to the individual after death ?

Human life is just a stage in the upward march of the soul. The individual has got birth as a human being, after going through lower forms of life. Human life is the final stage in man's progress to divinity. It is for him to make the most of this opportunity and thereby end the cycle of transmigration.

Death means the destruction of the physical self. The ashes and bone-dust mix with the elements. But the soul which leaves the body awaits a new dwelling. Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, even so the subtle soul casts off the worn-out body and dwells in a new form. If there were no continuance of the soul after death, how could it be perfect to merit union with the Almighty.

Sikhism believes in the immortality of the soul. The devotee has no fears or pangs of death. In fact, he welcomes death, because it gives him a chance for merger into Divinity. The evil person, however, dreads death. For him, it will be an unending cycle of birth and death. After death, man gets the next birth according to what he deserves. If he has been wicked and evil, he takes birth in the lower species. If he has done good deeds, he takes birth in a good family. The cycle of birth and death keeps the soul away from Divinity. It can merge with God, only if the individual, by spiritual effort, has amassed the capital of the *Name*.

Guru Arjan in the *Sukhmani* dwells on the sad plight of the soul which is not endowed with the *Name*. The

soul in its lonely march through darkness can find sustenance in the word of God. Otherwise it feels the weariness and pain of isolation.

The soul—*Jiva*—is a part of God. It is deathless like Him. Before creation, it lived with God. After creation it takes bodily forms according to His Will. The soul is however nourished by virtue and meditation on the *Name*. The transmigration of the soul can come to an end by meditation and divine grace.

28. Is there a judgement ?

Sikhism accepts the theory of *Karma* : that man is punished or rewarded according to his actions. Man's actions in this world will bear witness at the time of judgement. *Yamas*—the messengers of the god of death—take the individual to the god of justice—*Dharam Raj*—who is very strict like a money-lender. The scribes *Chitra* and *Gupta* who have written out the account are called forth to present the balance-sheet of his actions. What does the balance-sheet show ? It contains a record of good and evil deeds.

The god of justice cannot be bribed or influenced. He is strict and impartial and exacts a clear account. Certain faiths affirm that their prophets will plead for their followers in the court of justice. Sikhism does not accept this idea. Man is responsible for his actions and he cannot escape punishment through the intervention of a spiritual leader.

Perhaps the Gurus borrowed the old Puranic machinery of *Dharam Raj* and *Chitra Gupta* to impress on the minds of people the need of righteous and noble actions. Guru Nanak says : "According to one's action, one gets near to or distant from God." Elsewhere, the Guru affirms that the judgement on man's actions determines

the next birth or form for the individual's soul. The best action in the world is meditation on the *Name* which earns salvation or freedom from metem-psychosis.

The law of Karma is inexorable. Man's life is a series of actions. According to Sikhism, "Mind is the paper, actions are the ink; the good and the bad—virtue and vice—are both recorded therewith." Man sows the wind and yet expects that no whirlwind will follow. Man's choice of action will determine his future and next life. However, by repentence, prayer and love, man earns God's grace which neutralises his previous *Karma*. There is no account of *Karma* for one who surrenders himself to God. The true Sikh in a spirit of dedication and resignation invokes His grace and mercy, thereby inducing God to exercise his prerogative of admitting an erstwhile erring but now repentent soul to His kingdom.

29. Is there a hell or heaven ?

Man is judged according to his actions. If he has done evil deeds, he goes into lower forms of life; if he has done noble deeds, he gets a human life again. The idea of hell and heaven is a mere hypothesis. The picture of hell as a place of varied and terrible tortures is symbolic :

"There is a stream of fire from which come poisonous flames.

There is none else there except the self.

The waves of the ocean of fire are aflame.

And the sinners are burning in them." (Maru, I)

Shaikh Farid tells us that hell is a burning lake resounding with terrible cries. It may be added that the result of a sinful life is its adverse effect on character from which ultimately comes suffering and torment. In

short, to be in hell is to be out of the presence of God.

Similarly there is no actual place called heaven. Sikhism does not regard the winning of a place in heaven as a worthy object. The old Indian concept of heaven is of a beautiful place providing all sorts of comforts and luxuries. The devotee is neither afraid of hell nor anxious to go to heaven In a way, hell and heaven are conditions of mind. The virtuous man is happy and contented, as if he is living in heaven.

The concept of hell and heaven is just a rough illustration for clarifying the doctrine of Karma. Hell and heaven refer to evil or good stages of life respectively and they can be lived here and now in our earthly existence. According to Guru Arjan, "Wherever the praises of God are sung, there verily is heaven." Likewise, the society of the wicked is a hell. The condition of an average man is described thus : "Like birds that flock in the evening on a tree, flutter with pleasure and pain, scan the skies morning and evening wandering everywhere, driven by hunger, so the soul of man wanders and suffers on earth." The wolrdly man eats, enjoys and sleeps, unmindful of the higher things of life. He is free, and perhaps, he may choose wrongly.

30. What is Hukam ?

Hukam means order : that is God's order. By God's order all forms came into existence. The Divine will is responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of man and the universe. Whatever happens is by His will. *Hukam* takes the form of Natural Laws or universal axioms. All the parts of the universe are under His control.

According to Sikhism, true happiness is attained by

accepting and submitting to the Divine will. Guru Nanak says :

"How can I be truthful and break the wall of falsehood ?

By submission to His will, which is ingrained in me."

Living in harmony with the Divine will bring everlasting peace. Like a child, one has to be guided by the elders. Everything emanates from Him and is, therefore, significant. Saints and martyrs, in spite of occult powers, have submitted to torture and death in order to honour His will. "Thy will be done" is one of the basic principles of Sikhism. This does not imply the negation of individual volition. A Sikh must bring his will in line with the will of God.

What is God's *Hukam* ? The Gurus tell us that God's command is that one must merge one's will in His will. The service of God's creation is the best way of working in harmony with the Divine will. Secondly, God desires that man who has the Divine essence in Him should once again merge in Him and thereby end the cycle of Karma and transmigration.

Submission to God's will produces a sense of humility and self-abnegation. When man surrenders himself completely to Him, he regards himself as an instrument of His will. He realises that whatever comes from Him is for his own good. Even misery that he faces is a sort of mercy. He is full of gratitude and prayer for all He has done. Guru Arjan says :

"What thou doest is for my good,

Nanak seeketh happiness at thy feet alone."

The only antidote for egoism and vanity is complete surrender to His will. Only by conquering the self, one enters the realm of God's grace.

III. Principles

31. What is the goal of human life ?

Man's creation could not have been meaningless. It is difficult to affirm what God had in mind when He created man. But one thing is certain that human life is a grand opportunity for development.

There are three aspects of man—the body, the mind, the soul. The individual has to develop all the three aspects. For bodily development, he must earn his livelihood and follow the laws of health. For the development of the mind, he must study and educate himself. The cultivation of the intellect for interpreting the mysteries of life and nature is necessary. For the development of the soul, he must follow a course of strict moral discipline.

According to Sikhism, the individual has got the human form after going through innumerable cycles of birth and death. He must therefore try for spiritual evolution, so that he may be free from transmigration.

Nevertheless, the body must be sustained and maintained because it is the house of the soul and the temple of God. God and the individual soul are in essence one and the same. Man regards himself as a separate entity because of egoism. When the wall of egoism is broken, man realises his identity with God.

God's destiny for man is the realisation by him of the immortal aspirations through his mortal frame, the leading of a pure life in and through the physical body, and intellectual development. But unfortunately man is totally

obsessed with material things : clothes, food, ornaments, comforts and luxuries, and he neglects the things of the spirit. He wastes his precious life in frivolities and makes no effort towards God-realisation.

Life is like a game of cards. The cards are given to man; it is up to him to play the game well or badly, wisely or foolishly. God is watching him and feels keenly interested in man's efforts to do his best. Human life is neither a bondage nor a fetter but rather an instrument of spiritual attainment.

The goal of human life is, therefore, integration of individual personality with God.

32. Is a Guru necessary for spiritual evolution ?

Many religions of the world agree on the need of a spiritual guide. On meeting the true Guru, the ignorance of superstition is removed and divine knowledge obtained. The Guru gives light through his message. What is important is not the person but the *word.*

Undoubtedly, accordiug to Sikh religion, liberation cannot be won without a Guru. The Guru gives the *mantra* which is the means of the union of the disciple with God. *Wahguru* is the *mantra* for the Sikhs. Just as a teacher is necessary for secular studies in the same way the Guru's guidance is imperative because he has realised God. Guru Nanak says : "The perfect Guru has dispelled the darkness of delusion from my heart."

The Granth Sahib was installed as the permanent Guru by Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, because a stage had come when the Guru had fully discharged his office. The personal Guru now became the impersonal Guru in the Granth. The Granth presides over the Sikh congregation and it is the word of God in a permanent form.

The Sikhs, therefore, do not recognise any living person as Guru. The song-message of the Granth is the Sikhs' Guru for all time.

The true Guru reveals the divinity of man to the individual. He shows him the way to cross the ocean of life and to reach the Kingdom of Bliss. Guru Nanak says :

"The Guru is the Pool of Nectar,

We are the swans on its bank,

There is the sea of rubies and corals,

Of pearls and diamonds of the Lord's praise."

Just as milk cannot be kept in an unclean pot, in the same way, the Guru will not pour his nectar (*Nam*) in a dirty mind. By practising goodness and remembrance of the Name, the individual prepares the ground for the Guru's message. After due cleansing, the Guru administers the remedy of the *Name* with suitable directions.

We are fortunate that we do not have to search for a Guru, because Guru Granth is in our midst. By following the directions of *Gurbani*, we can progress on the spiritual plane.

33. What are the traits of a true Guru ?

In view of the need of a Guru, one must be on guard against a pseudo or fake Guru. Sikhism lays down certain qualifications and qualities of a Guru.

The Guru must be a perfect man who is able to inspire confidence in his disciples. He must run to their aid in any emergency. The Guru does not live in an ivory tower. He mixes freely with all sorts of people.

The Guru is not an incarnation of God. He is a humble prophet or messenger invested with the duty of

showing the true spiritual way to people. Guru Nanak says : "He in whom the Light is fully manifest is the Guru." He must be prepared to suffer for his principles. He must not claim any status or excellence for himself. He is fearless and without hate. He may come in conflict with hostile social forces, vested interests and evil people out to oppose him, but he must deal with them gently and bear ill-will to no one. Guru Nanak compares the Guru to a ladder, and sometimes to a ship. All the Sikh Gurus had the same light—*Jot*—the Divine Spirit in them.

Perhaps one of the greatest traits of the Sikh Gurus was their humility. Guru Nanak regarded himself as the lowest of the lowly. Other Gurus also were meek in spirit. They accepted all suffering in a spirit of resignation. Guru Arjan and Guru Teg Bahadur became martyrs to the cause they cherished and in spite of supernatural powers, refused to exercise them, because the working of miracles is not in accordance with the will of God.

The Guru occupies a very high status in Sikh religion. Guru Nanak says :

"The divine spark is in all,

It pervades every heart,

By the grace of the Guru,

It is revealed and the devotee feels blessed."

Slowly and steadily, the Guru guides the development of the Sikh to perfection. And if the Sikh be very lucky, the Guru transforms him into the Guru. The Guru remembers the *Name* day and night and makes others do so. He is just like a boat to ferry the people across the tempestuous ocean of life.

Meeting a true Guru is a sign of good luck. The disciple must prepare himself morally and spiritually for his guidance. He is a tower of strength, nay, a beacon light in this dark world.

34. Did the Sikh Gurus perform miracles ? If so, why ?

Prophets and saints have performed miracles. A miracle is an extraordinary event which reason or science cannot explain. Science has not yet advanced so far as to explain everything. According to the scientist, miracles have nothing to do with holiness or piety. Miracles are "not happenings against the laws of God, but are the result of superior powers which God bestows on His servants." Men of God are able to do things which are beyond the understanding of the scientist's limited reason.

Sikhism accepts the possibility of supernatural powers, but like any worldly possession, they should not be used for selfish ends. A Sikh should not run after occultism, because the greatest gift is *Nam* and not supernatural power.

According to Sikhism, occult powers come naturally through concentration on the *Name*. Miracles should not be performed at the bidding of a king or a leader or to prove the greatness of one's religion or to confirm the faith of people in a spiritual guide. Guru Ramdas says : "The desire to perform miracles is a worldly attachment and is an obstacle in the way of the *Nam* residing in our hearts."

The Sikh Gurus did perform miracles off and on, but they did so out of compassion or to set an erring fellow right. Guru Nanak made the bitter soap-nuts sweet near Pilibhit to save Mardana from death by starvation.

The Guru condemned miracles performed for personal glory. Bhai Ram Rai who performed a miracle at the command of Emperor Aurangzeb was excommunicated. Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur were requested to perform miracles so that their lives may be spared. They refused to do so and welcomed the penalty of death. The greatest miracle was not to perform a miracle, in spite of the capacity to do so. As Emerson puts it : "Self sacrifice

is the real miracle out of which all the reported miracles flow."

Guru Nanak was asked by the *Sikhs* about his supernatural powers. He answered : "I can do nothing against the law of God. It is only He who can perform a miracle. The true Name is the miracle of miracles. I know no other miracle." Saintly people do not like to interfere with God's Will by performing miracles. The Sikh Gurus never performed miracles to convince others about their faith or to save themselves from calamities or penalties.

35. What is the relation between the Sikh and the Guru ?

The word *Sikh* means a learner, a student. He is therefore to get his instruction from a teacher who is called Guru. The personality of the Guru is so influential that it completely transforms the disciple and shapes his life to diviner issues. This is achieved not by personal and physical instruction but by the belief that the Sikh incorporates the Guru. The Sikh "fills himself with the Guru and then feels himself linked up to an inexhaustible source of power." By taking the aid of Guru Gobind Singh, he feels terribly strong—equal to one lakh and a quarter in physical and mental prowess. He will fight all odds and lay down his life for the cause. He is the Guru's standard-bearer and he cannot afford to lower it or desert it. It is this kinship with the Guru which sustains him in a crisis. Bhai Joga Singh, when about to fall, was thus saved from a moral disaster by Guru Gobind Singh.

The Sikhs filling themselves with Guru's own personality, collectively became the Guru in the form of *Panth* : "The Guru lives within his Sikhs and is pleased with what ever they like." The idea of religious fellowship was given practical shape by *Sewa*, or service. *Langar* or *Pangat* where people dine together in the free kitchen, is yet

another illustration of the composite character of the Guru. The idea of *Sangat* or holy fellowship—generally for the holding of congregational prayers in the form of *Kirtan* and *Katha*—led to the establishment of *Gurudwaras* and religious organisations. Collectively the Sikh assemblies were known as the *Panth*—the embodiment of the Guru. Gurn Gobind Singh merged his personality in the body of the community he created.

The Guru stands for Truth and the practice of Truth. The truth revealed in the *Granth* is timeless and changeless. But the methods of implementing the Truth are left to the growing personality of the Panth. That is why the *Guru Panth* is never a back number and is ever up-to-date to guide the Sikhs. All important questions today are decided by the community as a whole in the form of deliberated resolutions—*Gurmattas*—which have the sanction of the Guru.

Guru Gobind Singh totally identified himself with the Khalsa. He affirmed : "Through their favour, I am exalted, otherwise there are millions of ordinary men like me."

36. Can prayer change things or destiny ?

Those who offer prayers sincerely know the efficacy and value of prayer. Other people think that prayer may give consolation and peace to a man but cannot affect physical events, because the universe is governed by law. If fire burns today, it will burn tomorrow, in spite of prayer. Life is regular and smooth because of these unchanging laws. Saints and mystics possess great powers. What we regard as a miracle may really be the power of prayer or the working of a spiritual law. Prayer is a supplication to God made generally without any personal motive. God knows the desires and sincerity of the indi-

vidual and it is up to Him to accept or reject a request made to Him.

Certain basic laws are interacted by other laws. Aeroplanes fly, thereby working against the law of gravity, but they are governed by the laws of aerodynamics.

Prayer may help in a psychological way. People are made ill by a fear or tension. The effect is physical but the cause is mental. So prayer may also heal in the same way by removing the mental cause.

According to Sikhism, prayer can change man's mind. Just as dirt is washed away by soap, in the same way man's evil thoughts are washed away by prayer and meditation. Sinners have turned into saints by the power of prayer. The example of Sajjan, the thug, is well-known. Bhai Gurdas has cited the case of Queen Tara Lochan. Her lost sandals were restored to her by prayer.

Guru Arjan emphasises the role of prayer :

"The Praising of His Name is the highest of all practices,

It has uplifted many a human soul,

It slakes the desire of the restless mind,

And imparts an all-seeing vision."

Prayer is not mere auto-suggestion. At best it is concentrating on God and His qualities. God is goodness, truth, patience, peace and love. When a man offers prayers, God enters into his life and gives His qualities to the devotee. With such qualities and power, he can mould things. Others may regard such events as just coincidences but people who understand recognise them as the effect of prayer : "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

37. Should we ask for worldly things in prayer ?

Real prayer is deep and inward; it is a dialogue between man and God. It is being in companionship with the Almighty.

Man's friendship with God should enable him to grow like Him. In the moments of vision, man seems to forget his body and the world he lives in. He is with his Lord and Benefactor.

Real prayer is pure adoration and dedication. It has no ulterior aim, no worldly things to gain. Prayer with a purpose, with a material desire defeats its own purpose.

Man has been described as God's bride. Just as the wife would place all her needs and demands before her husband, in the same way, man places before God his needs. A good husband would meet the requirements of his spouse, and give her guidance and help.

According to Sikh religion, worldly things can be demanded in prayer, but on principle, they should not be asked. Things which render service to the soul and advance man on the spiritual plane can be requested for. Guru Nanak requests God to give him contentment, humility and His Name. The praise of God is the only thing the devotee needs.

Even if we ask for worldly things and He in His grace gives them to us, we never feel contented. No man has felt that he has enough. He does not know what is good for him. And when God does not grant his prayers, he blames God and curses His creation. God does like to bless him but it is his sin or sloth which prevents the blessing coming through. It is the ego which prompts one to ask for this thing or that for oneself. This is contrary to the principle of submission to the will of God.

Instead of asking for worldly things, the Sikh must put his trust in God and entreat Him to do what He

thinks best. The Almighty never fails those who surrender themselves completely to Him.

In the Sikh supplication—*Ardas*—every Sikh prays for the constant remembrance of the Name and the welfare of all mankind. The right prayer creates hope, confidence and courage in the individual.

38. What is the Sikh prayer ?

The prayer called *Ardas* was given to the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh. The first part invokes God and the blessings of first nine Gurus. The second part recounts the events of Sikh history and the struggles faced and the sacrifices made for the reform of temples and maintenance of Sikh traditions. The third part pertains to the reciter's own thoughts and the special purpose or the occasion for it. In the end, the Sikh prays for a humble mind and sound intellect, the victory of the *Panth*, the meditation on the *Word* and the good of entire humanity.

The Sikh believes in a personal God. He must go to Him every now and then, because he regards Him as a friend and benefactor. He recites a prayer before he starts any work or business. Even if he has no time for a full *Ardas*, he will recite a short prayer.

The Sikh prayer can be led by any man or woman ; it is congregational in the nature of its contents. It recounts the sacrifices of the Sikhs but makes no mention of the enemies of the Sikhs. The idea behind it is to inspire the Sikhs to similar heroic deeds in times of need.

Prayer is a means of ridding the mind of its ills and desires and filling it with pure thoughts and noble aspirations. True prayer is an effort for heart-searching, a means to becoming purer and nobler. The mind must be emptied of all worldly things so that peace may enter into it.

The Sikh prayer implies complete surrender to the Divine Will. Resignation to the Will of God will ultimately benefit the individual. Then He takes up his problems and sorts them out. The Lord will never fail him who throws himself to His Mercy. Moreover, this submission eliminates the ego—the wall which stands between man and his Creator.

The reading of the *Adi Granth* is a kind of prayer. We seek the Guru's command. He gives us wise counsel, but it is for us to obey. Merely worshipping the scripture without carrying its teaching into daily life is the very negation of prayer. True prayer is practical living up to the word of the Guru and the continual effort for spiritual development.

39. Is it possible to conquer death ?

Death has been interpreted in different ways. According to the general concept, death is the extinction of the body and the sense-organs. According to Sikh Gurus, death is the forgetting of God. Guru Nanak says: "If I remember Him, I live; when I forget Him, I am dead", It is this forgetfulness of God which makes man enter the cycle of birth and death.

Sikhism was born under the shadow of the sword. Guru Gobind Singh, at the time of the creation of Khalsa, called for the Sikhs who were prepared to lay down their lives. The acid test of the Khalsa is his readiness to give up his life. The Khalsa covets the best type of death—death in battle—while fighting the enemies of the country or of the Faith.

According to Sikhism, physical death is neither painful nor terrible. All must die because the physical frame is subject to decay. But there is something like the art of dying. There is a joy at the prospect of coming death.

Even the worst tortures cause no fright to the devotee. Look at the Sikh martyrs. It is no joke to be cut joint by joint, to have the skin peeled off, to be sawn alive, to be blown away at the cannon's mouth, or to be crushed under the wheels of a railway engine. The martyrs were the real conquerors of death.

Those who know the art of true living also know that of true dying. True living is dying to the self, the ego, and living up to God. True dying is the privilege of the brave who die for an approved cause. Aimless dying—for no cause—helps nobody.

To conquer death is to merit salvation. Death has a terror for the ordinary mortal. He is afraid because he has not made any progress on the spiritual plane. He feels worried for his sins and the fear of punishment for his misdeeds.

The true devotee welcomes death as friend and as a benefactor, because he looks forward to a union with the Supreme Being. He knows that it is through the gate of physical death that he will be able to embrace his Beloved Lord. Death is nothing but a gate-way to Divinity and Eternity. This mortal coil will be shaken off, to don the robe of God's bride.

40. What is Karma ?

The scientific concept of cause and effect, action and reaction is called the law of *Karma* in religious parlance. A man reaps what he sows. Is it not strange that in spite of the law of *Karma*, man expects nectar after sowing poison ?

Just as our present life is the result of past Karma, the present Karma will determine our future life. Karma operates in this life and successive ones. The law of Karma

does not cease to operate after death, because death is just a matter of physical disintegration, leaving the soul to survive.

God is the Creator of the first Karma, the origin of the universe, and the destroyer of Karma.

Good and evil actions by frequent repetition leave their impressions on character. A man doing wicked deeds continuously will turn into a bad character. This again will produce states of mind like anxiety, fear and guilt, and cause pain and suffering to the individual.

Karma does not mean that everything is pre-ordained and that man has no free-will. He carries his past Karma in the form of character. His own actions make him what he is. Guru Nanak says, "the record of my deeds cannot be effaced because God has recorded them." Man has the freedom to sow the seed, the choice and the initiative to a certain extent, as also the ability to change the course of events, though circumscribed by heredity and environment. God as the Ruler of the universe controls the over-all destiny of individuals. Like the prodigal son, the sinner turns to Him as the last resort.

Sikhism modified the theory of Karma in two directions. Firstly, efforts of the individual are necessary for improving his condition. Man is responsible for his lot He must not blame God for his destiny. He must think of the present and the future. Secondly, Karma can be changed by prayer and the grace of God.

When the individual learns to submit to His will, he ceases to make new Karma. He offers all his actions to Him; he acts as the instrument of His will. According to Sikhism, all past Karma is, so to say, erased through the association with saints and meditation on the Name.

41. Is there Fate or Freewill, according to Sikhism ?

Sikhism affirms the omnipotence of God and consequently modifies the concept of Karma. Man is not a helpless puppet. The course of fate may be compared to the flow of a river, while individual action may look like an eddy or a whirlpool or a wave.

Man has a dual role : first, as a person in a particular community and environment, working under certain limitations, and second, as an individual with a free will wanting to do this thing or that to elevate himself. He is like a merchant trading with a certain capital. He may lose it or invest it wisely to earn profit. He is free to sow the seed but once he has done so, he has no option other than to reap the fruit. Predestination is responsible for the present; and the present gives us opportunities to mould the future. It is just like the rotation and the revolution of the earth. The earth revolves round the sun and is influenced by it, but it has its own motion as well.

According to Sikhism, man is an active being—*a Karma Yogi*—who has to overcome his difficulties with understanding and wisdom. The effort of the individual is to take the form of detached action and not feeding the ego. He must work altruistically—for mankind, and not for the self.

Spiritual effort has to be blessed by Divine favour in order to be successful. This effort is a sort of self-surrender to His will. If man works selfishly—in *Maya*—he suffers; if he works selflessly according to the will of God he is saved. This self-surrender is a conscious effort to win divine grace. The self-effort is to bring the divine will and individual free will in harmony. That is how the two wills are reconciled. Man's salvation lies in his own effort to drown his ego in the Divine will.

Guru Nanak explains the point through a metaphor :

"The mind is the paper on which are recorded in the will of our deeds—good and bad—the impressions, as the habit of our cumulative past dictates, but limitless are the virtues of our Lord. For He turneth dross into gold and the fires (passions) of the body are extinguished."

42. What is Grace ?

If the theory of Karma were carried to its logical extreme, no man would deserve redemption. In Sikhism, the doctrine of Karma is modified by the principle of grace. Man's sincere efforts and noble deeds may achieve precious little. What is required is a constant solicitation of His aid in the spiritual endeavour. Austerities, meditation, acts of love and charity are merely the means of winning His grace.

The devotee, in all humility, like the true bride surrenders everything to the pleasure of Her Lord. Surrender to God does not mean slavery but freedom and extension of horizons. Undoubtedly, exemplary conduct, good actions and sweet words are necessary but without grace, they will produce no result. According to Guru Nanak, Karma can be undone by His grace. Just as it is the privilege of the Head of the State to pardon a felon who has been duly convicted by a court of law, in the same way, it is God's prerogative to redeem evil-doers and enable them to enter His kingdom. It is His privilege to grant grace to those whom He likes. According to J.C. Archer, the sovereignty and omnipotence of God is qualified by grace.

The doctrine of grace does not mean that there are certain chosen prophets and chosen people. God does not have any favourites nor does he make an arbitrary choice. The devotee must prepare himself fully and truly for being the recipient of His favour. He must empty his

mind of evil and fill it with the Name. It creates a feeling of the presence of God within one's self.

The grace of God may come to the scholar or the unlettered, the high or the low, the rich or the poor. It does not depend on birth, knowledge, wisdom or penance. Those who seek grace through service and humility understand the purpose of life. The fire lies dormant in the wood; one has to kindle it by effort. To realise this Truth is to get in tune with the Infinite.

The Almighty is so Grace-abounding—*Kirpanidh*—that the receiver shouts to Him : "Enough, no more." His bounties know no limit or hindrance.

43. What is Bhagti ?

According to Sikhism, *Bhagti* (also spelt *Bhakti*) is a way of life, a dynamic manifestation of faith, a kindling of the mind and awakening of the heart.

Bhagti is absolute devotion to God. Bhagti does not mean living in an ivory tower, isolated from one's fellowmen. It is neither asceticism nor renunciation. It is the leading of a dedicated life in the midst of the world. Rivalry among different Bhagti sects is the very negation of spirituality. Real Bhagti is service of God's creation, benevolence and kindness for all types of men, without any distinction. It is both humanism and humanitarianism.

Bhagti may take either an outward or an inner form. The Sikh Gurus rejected the outer form like devotional dancing. They emphasised devotion through inner love. Bhagti, rightly interpreted, is giving oneself away. Even if one is poor, one can share one's love and sympathy with others. This gift of affection, this pouring of the heart, this flow of sympathy and understanding is the true worship of God.

Bhagti enjoins self-analysis and self-control. Both the body and the mind have to be trained according to the Guru's word. Guru Nanak says : "This body is the field, the mind the ploughman, modesty the irrigating channel, contentment the leveller. Pulverise the crust of pride into true humility, sow the seed of love—the seed of Bhagti—and it will flourish."

The Sikh Gurus developed the concept of Bhagti in two ways. While the Hindu saints and mystics discussed the academic aspects of Bhagti, the Gurus practically demonstrated it through creative literature, through hymns in adoration of the Almighty. Secondly, the concept of Bhagti which was confined to idols and living persons was extended to cover the all-embracing devotion to the Timeless and the Formless. Dedication to *Nirgun* God is the highest form of Bhagti.

The *Bhagat* is an example of a practical man of God, a sort of super-man, who by a life of ethical discipline faces the problems of life and lives nobly and worthily.

44. Who is a saint ?

A saint need not follow any orthodox form or uniform. He can be known by his qualities. A saint remains unattached to the five deadly sins. He must be pure in thought, word and deed. He is unaffected by the three qualities of sin, inertia and virtue—*Tamas*, *Rajas*, and *Satav*.

A saint regards himself as a humble servant of God. He voluntarily surrenders himself wholly to His will. He accepts God as His only prop and support.

A saint is not chained by any fetters of ceremonials, social regulations or public opinion. He is dedicated to the mission of *Bhagti* and spreading the *Name* among the masses.

The saint sees God in everything and therefore loves all. He lives in the world and yet remains unattached to its objects. Guru Arjan has summed up the characteristics of a saint in these words :

"The saint realises the presence of God at all hours,

He regards the will of God as sweet,

His only support is the Name.

Yet he is humble to be the dust of all...

He finds comfort in melodious *Kirtan*

He regards friends and foes alike.

He knows none as well as God." (Asa, V).

The man of God does not keep himself aloof from his fellowmen. He mixes freely with them and volunteers to serve them and satisfy their wants. For him none is high or low. His love radiates equally to all. A saint is the very image of God. A meeting with him burns the ego and confirms the devotee in the remembrance of the *Name*.

The man of God follows both personal and social ethics. He is just, tolerant, patient, modest, generous and merciful. He leads an ideal life, pure and clean. He sets an example for others to follow, not through pride but humility. He loves to save a lost soul like a shepherd going in search of a strayed lamb. He proceeds slowly and steadily to redeem the wicked one and bring him to the right path.

45. What are the virtues, according to Sikhism ?

Virtue being the ability to do good is a great aid to the achievement of peace and happiness. Self-control in itself is a great virtue, because the mind usually keeps brooding on evil. Control over organs of action—*Karam*

Indries—is really necessary. The mischief of the tongue and the eye cannot be adequately assessed or controlled. Bhai Gurdas insists on the cultivation of sweet speech, toleration and charity.

Truth occupies a place among the virtues recommended by the Gurus. According to Guru Nanak, "Truth is the remedy of all ills and washes away all sins." Truth includes righteousness, honesty, justice, impartiality and fair play. A truthful living is actually a life lived according to the pattern of the Gurus.

Contentment is another virtue. A contented mind is free from ambition, envy, greed and jealousy. Without contentment, it is impossible to acquire peace of mind.

Patience is another quality which a Sikh ought to cultivate. Patience gives courage to put up bravely with all the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Forbearance, particularly when one is in a position to punish one's opponent is a great asset.

Another great virtue is *Sewa* (service). It is service of all types of men, without distinction of caste and creed. The Sikh seeks in his *Ardas* the welfare of all mankind. The test of one's devotion to God is the measure of one's love for humanity. This devotion takes the form of service of the *Sangat* and *Pangat*—temple of bread. Service frees man from pride and greed.

Perhaps the greatest virtue demonstrated practically by the Sikh Gurus was humility—*garibi.* They never proclaimed their powers or reproved vehemently those in the wrong. The service of the socially depressed is mutually beneficial. According to Guru Nanak, "Sweetness and humility are the essence of all goodness and virtue."

The Sikh regards the practice of virtue as a means to an end. His goal is the integration of human personality and spiritual realisation.

46. What are the five main vices ?

Each religion determines a set of vices which its followers should avoid. In Christianity, there are the seven deadly sins. Sikhism regards sin as wilful disobedience of the law of God or principles of morality. Sin is a defiance of the Moral Law.

In order to avoid vice, we should have knowledge of the vice itself and the will to overcome it. In Sikhism, there are five cardinal vices : *Kam* (Lust), *Krodh* (Anger), *Lobh* (Greed), *Moh* (Worldly attachment), *Ahankar* (Pride). These are the great enemies of man and cause him much suffering. While these reside within the body, how can the Name of God find a place in it !

Lust is a grave sin and produces nothing but shame and misery. Sikhism allows the householder to have his normal sex with his wife, but any indulgence besides is forbidden. Similarly, promiscuity and sex perversion are tabooed.

Anger is the excitement of the mind which leads to quarrels and violence. Anger is conquered by patience and forgiveness. God dwells in every heart and so one should not hurt the God in another man.

Greed is desire for money or love of gain. Money rightly used and earned by honest labour is permissible. What is objected to is the excessive love of money—specially money obtained by fraud and unfair means. Avarice can be conquered by contentment. Moreover, excessive wealth creates desire for luxury and consequent vice.

Attachment is love of objects like wife, children and material goods. Regard your near and dear ones as objects of trust and service. They cannot remain yours for long.

Pride is the worst of the five vices. It implies excessive

conceit, vanity, jealousy or arrogance. It is the ego thinking aloud. The remedy for pride is humility. Humility, forgiveness and compassion go together. The true Sikh regards himself as the dust of the feet of other people.

With the Guru's grace, these five vices may turn into humble servants of the devotee. Instead of their controlling the individual, they may do him service at his bidding.

47. What is the place of evil, according to Sikhism ?

Everything is created by God, even evil. But what we regard as evil has a special purpose to serve. Evil is neither Satan nor any demon. This Dark Age, *Kalyuga*, is the period when evil is likely to thrive.

The purpose of evil is to test the character of man. According to Guru Nanak : "Suffering is the remedy and comfort is a disease." Man is liable to succumb to temptation. The greater the faith, the greater the evil to challenge it. Great men have faced evil and tyranny—whether in the form of a persecutor or a traitor or one's kith and kin—in order to prove the triumph of the spirit over matter.

The company of the evil-minded is to be shunned at all costs. It is the gateway to the cycle of birth and death. It is compared to pitch which defiles whoever comes in contact with it. Guru Arjan in the *Sukhmani* warns us against association with the godless.

The mind of man is more prone to evil than to good. Man is slow to take to virtue but swift to succumb to vice. Nonetheless, it is necessary to purge the mind of evil thoughts by constant effort, before good can enter it. Evil actions arise out of man's evil thinking, due to lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Other evil

actions take the form of lying, drinking, gambling, begging and back-biting. Sikhism does not believe in the original sin, that man has to suffer for the sins of his forefathers.

Perhaps the strongest shield against evil is the society of the good and the pious. The company of holy men has a positive role to play in spiritual attainment. In their company, one is influenced by their words and deeds and therefore becomes noble and pious. Guru Nanak suggests the remedy against evil : "Make Truth the knife and let it be sharpened on the whetstone of the Name and kept protected in the sheath of virtue."

Egoism is perhaps the greatest evil because it creates a wall between man and the Creator. This wall can be removed by submission to His will and the seeking of Divine aid. In his daily prayer, the Sikh invokes God's grace to keep him away from evil thoughts, words and actions.

48. What is the value of fasting ?

Fasting is good for health but it has no religious merit. Some sects of the Hindus hold very strong views on fasting. For them, fasting has some real value and has to be strictly followed.

Sikhism does not regard fasting as meritorious. God has given us the human body—the temple of the soul—which has to be nourished and cared for. Fasting as an austerity, as a ritual, as a mortification of the body by means of wilful hunger is forbidden in Sikhism. Guru Nanak says : "Penance, fasting. austerity, alms giving are inferior to truth; right action is superior to all."

There are sects which do not eat this thing or that. Some persons will not touch cereals, but will take other

types of food. Such people may be treated as hypocrites, They give up the use of certain types of cereals, not because they want to, but because they wish to impress others. It is the feeding of the ego rather than the earning of merit. According to Guru Nanak true fasting is the renunciation of the fruit of one's actions.

Fasting for reasons of health is understandable. But this should be done under strict medical advice. There are some people who fast regularly on a particular day in the week. This may mean rest fort he digestive organs. It may also serve as a means of saving food, particularly in times of famine or food scarcity or simply a method of balancing the domestic budget.

Sikhism encourages temperance and moderation in matters of food. Neither starve nor over-eat : this is the golden mean. Men who want to engage in meditation should however take simple but nourishing food. Healthy food but in small quantity—*Alap Ahar*, just enough to keep body and soul together and to prevent sleep and sloth—is recommended to the devotee. On the other hand, gluttony—quite common among the Pandas of Hardwar and Kashi—is not only socially bad but also morally reprehensible.

The golden rule about fasting is : Fast only when you must, in the interest of your health.

49. What is the value of pilgrimage ?

Hindu tradition emphasises the role of pilgrimage in spiritual development. Sikhism does not consider pilgrimage as an act of spiritual merit. Guru Nanak went to places of pilgrimage to reclaim the fallen people who had turned ritualists. He told them of the need of visiting the temple of God, deep in the inner being of the individual.

According to him : "He indeed performs a pilgrimage who controls the five vices."

People go to centres of pilgrimage for a variety of reasons : some for religious formality, some for show, some for fun and some for a holiday from morality. Some people delight in visiting holy shrines, in the belief that their sins will be forgiven. But bath or other rituals cannot wash away sins. Real dirt pertains to the mind; it is inward. The growth of desire or *Maya* cannot be removed by physical action. Nevertheless, visits to historical places connected with activities of holy men have a marginal utility. They remind the people of their goodness and traditions. Possibly one may also come across some holy persons at religious centres.

The futility of wandering at the so-called sacred places is amply illustrated by the life of Guru Amardas. Before he became a Guru, he went on pilgrimage twenty times, but without benefit. He got the light when he met Guru Angad. The Gurus tried to remove the wrong notion of the efficacy of pilgrimage. Guru Nanak says : "I would like to go to pilgrimage, only if it pleased God." Elsewhere, he says : "My places of pilgrimage are the *word*, contemplation and divine knowledge within me."

Guru Gobind Singh was very emphatic about the futility of pilgrimage. According to him, without God's Name, such visits have not the slightest significance. Kabir sought God in the temple of his mind. He, therefore, migrated from Banaras, a well-known sacred city, to Magahar—a traditionally cursed town.

Real pilgrimage is a visit to the Guru which gives enlightenment. Guru Nanak says :

"Guru is the place of pilgrimage on the flowing river,
When the Lord showers His grace, the soul bathes,
In the Pool of Truth and becomes pure."

50. What is true education, according to Sikhism ?

The aim of education is the development and integration of human personality. The present system is lopsided and needs modification. Guru Nanak based the uplift of man on the cultivation of character. It is character which helps us to make the right choice or to take the right step in a moral crisis. Temptations come so suddenly that man has to take quick decisions. Unless one has sufficient virtue and guts, acquired by steady practice over a number of years, one is likely to fall a prey to evil.

The function of education is to prepare the intellectual, aesthetic and emotional background in such a way that the individual's development is assured. He must follow *Dharma,* in its broad aspect, which includes reverence for teachers and elders, a solicitude for the welfare of neighbours and fellow-citizens, respect for all types of life : birds, animals, plants, and an emphasis on duties rather than rights.

Guru Nanak taught us the three *Hs* in place of the three *Rs*, namely the knowledge of the *Hand*, knowledge of the *Head* and the knowlege of the *Heart*. The education of the Hand implies the dignity of labour, self-reliance and the need of service of humanity. The education of the Head implies the appreciation of the wonders of Nature, the understanding of the mysteries of the universe and the search for truth. The education of the Heart includes the awakening of the higher self and finding true inspiration within.

Guru Nanak explained the true significance of the letters of the alphabet to the *Pandit* and the *Mullah*. *Alif* stands for *Allah*, *Sassa* stands for awareness of God—the Creator of the universe. He laid emphasis on character-building, citizenship and service : "The essence of wisdom is the service of humanity." Guru Nanak trained his

disciple Angad through a creative and purposeful discipline. Just as a student needs a teacher, so a disciple needs the guidance of a Guru. Man may find it difficult to resist evil and do good, if left on his own, but if he is assisted by a great personality possessing dynamic powers, his progress will be steady and significant.

51. What is conscience ?

Within each individual is an inner judgement which tells him what is right and what is wrong. Conscience is popularly called the voice of God. Even people who follow no particular religion have moral sense. They know what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Even atheists who have done a wrong thing express remorse because they have felt dejected and unclean. This is probably due to the weight of public opinion or perhaps the moral sense that was built into them during childhood.

Undoubtedly, the Sikhs believe in the moral order of the universe and feel that God is both just and generous. He resides in the individual. The God within guides the human being through an inner voice. This is generally termed as conscience. Inside the individual, there is a perpetual struggle between good and evil. The conscience denounces evil and supports the good. We become happy if we follow its command and unhappy if we disobey it.

The conscience—*Vivek*—differs with individuals, depending on the stage of evolution of each person. It is, therefore, necessary to educate the moral sense. This is best done by association with holy men and meditation on the Word. The conscience also differs at different times in its firmness, and power to control human actions. Whenever we are in doubt—whether we should do a particular thing or not—we must take the matter to the court of

conscience. We should expect the best advice and follow it up in actual life. There are however persons whose conscience is dormant. Persistent evil blunts the conscience and suppresses it.

The basic doctrine of Sikh religion is to follow the will of God. How shall we find the will of God? According to Guru Nanak, it is embedded in the core of human personality or concience. To follow one's concience is, therefore, to live up to the will of God.

52. What is Maya ?

Sikhism does not accept the conventional meaning of *Maya*—an illusion. The world is not *Maya*; it is a creation of God and as such an abode of the Truthful One, or rather a Temple of Divinity. According to Sikhism, Maya is the principle of duality. It is duality which makes one forget the Lord and attracts man to wealth, beauty, power or scholarship.

The root of Maya is egoism, the assertion of the self, which makes a man feel separate from his divine part. By such fetters, man binds himself to his kith and kin and worldly possessions. Maya is a trap for the soul.

Maya may take a subtle form like self-conciousness or self-complacency. It may form different patterns like intellectual pride, family attachment, pleasure-seeking and money-grabbing. It plays an important part in daily life.

The Guru by his grace gives the antidote for Maya. It is the Name of God which works as a spell. Maya gets under control and no longer harasses the disciple.

The dirt of Maya has accumulated through many births. It sticks to the individual like a leech. Maya produces a sense of isolation and man falls to the level

of an animal forgetting his divine essence. Undoubtedly, the individual soul has to realise, sooner of later that the Supreme soul lives within. This is the spiritual awakening which secures liberation from passions and desires. This liberation comes through self-control and a practical virtuous living. It is true that association with Guru and the company of holy men facilitates this realisation of man's divine origin.

The evil effect of Maya takes long to eradicate. Along with self-effort, Guru's grace is quite necessary. Guru Nanak says : "The true Guru has revealed the One to me. I have destroyed duality and recognised Him through the Guru's word." Between man and God is the wall of ignorance, and once it is removed, man realises his kinship with Divinity.

53. What is egoism (haumai) ?

Man is of divine essence. He is not separate from God, but on account of his self-assertion, he thinks that he is distinct from Him. He builds around himself the wall of egoism—haumai—which makes him forget God in himself and things around. This is called *Agyan* or ignorance, Guru Nanak says, "Ignorance has its roots in the image of the self." However, some feel that *Maya* or the illusive world creates the sense of separateness or duality. Whether Maya or ego, the separation of the individual soul from the universal source is the cause of misery and consequent transmigration. Man's building up of his separate identity is the root of suffering.

According to Sikhism, man is responsible for his actions. Human will—the ego—makes man do good or bad deeds, which again lead to further consequences.

The ego takes the form of pride or vanity which may be due to learning, power or money. It leads to arrogance

and a sense of superiority which makes one disregard and hate other men. This not only alienates him from his fellow-men, but also from God who views with disfavour man standing like a Colossus, in complete oblivion of the source of all power. Egoistic actions are like chains round the neck of the individual.

The cure of egoism lies within it. If man subjects his will to God's will and regards himself only as an instrument of God he raises himself above action and its chain of consequences. Self-assertion is the disease, self-surrender, the cure. Submission to His will removes the barrier between man and God. Guru Ramdas says, "The bride and the bridegroom live together, with a partition of ego between them. Once this partition is removed, man enjoys his union with the Creator." When a man understands that all things are subject to God's will—including his own self, he lives and moves in tune with Him. If he, by the assertion of the self, cuts himself off from Reality, he wanders in the wilderness. But it is possible like the Prodigal Son, to come back to the bosom of the Father.

54. What is the Name : Nam ?

The word '*Nam*' is derived from the Sanskrit *Naman* which means the practice of remembrance. So the remembrance of God—*Nam Marg* is the essence of Sikhism. Life without the *Name* or the *Word*, or *Simran* is barren and meaningless. The Name alone gives true peace of mind. The obstacles to the Name are wordly thoughts, sleep and occult powers.

The Name is inside every individual. It is for the Guru to reveal it to the devotee. The devotee does his normal duties with hands and feet, but he keeps his conscious mind in tune with the lord. Some men practise the Name

with the regulation of breath; they utter 'Wah' with inhalation and 'Guru' with exhalation. Perhaps this depends on individual convenience.

The Name performs three functions—it is purgative that is it removes evils; it is illuminative because it gives us knowledge of Truth, Beauty and Goodness; it is unitive, that is, it brings one in tune with God. The remembrance is also three-fold : with words, with the mind and with actions. The repetition of *Gurbani* helps the mind to concentrate on God. It is the precious food of the soul.

The technique of the Name follows certain phases—first the repetition of the *Name* : *Wahguru* by mouth, second, the percolation of Name into the mind, third, the longing for God like a lover waiting for his beloved, fourth the vision of God everywhere and finally the union with the Almighty.

For effective remembrance of *Nam*, the devotee must take certain precautions. He must get up early morning and meditate during the ambrosial hours of the dawn. He must avoid idleness and the five great vices. The company of holy men is a great help to meditation. Strict moral conduct also helps him on the spiritual plane. Even then divine grace is necessary for the practice of *Nam*.

The Name, apart from meditation, means the All-pervading Spirit. The entire world depends on the Name. Therefore, to mediate on *Nam* is to practise the presence of God by keeping Him ever in one's mind and by singing His praises or dwelling on His excellences. This produces a feeling of wonder and bliss.

55. What is Sahaj Yoga ?

"Yoga" means union, and therefore, the means of merger into Divinity. Guru Nanak's way is called—*Nam*

Yoga or *Sahaj Yoga.* The word *Sahaj* means gradual process. Just as vegetables cooked over a slow fire retain their flavour, in the same way, gradual discipline of the mind and body will bring out the essential goodness of a human being. Sahaj Yoga differs radically from *Raja Yoga* and the *Hath Yoga.*

Sahaj Yoga wihch is peculiar to Sikhism is the best of the three traditional Yogas--*Karma Yoga, Gian Yoga* and *Bhagti Yoga.* Here the three types merge to form an ideal one. Actions which are noble and righteous, along with the meditation on the *Name* and the elimination of the ego pave the way for God-realisation. In the *Adi Granth,* it is called the Fourth stage, *Chautha Pad,* which means that it is beyond the three *Gunas* : *Rajas* (desire), *Tamas* (passion), and *Satav* (peace), and the three states—Awakening, Dream and Dreamless sleep. It is a state of equipoise called *Turiya.*

The maladies of the soul have to be cured in this very life, otherwise they are carried over to the next life. A dedicated life of self discipline is essential ;

"He who controls the five senses.

And does not waver.

He attains the way of Yoga."

Just as the lotus remains in water and is not made wet by it, so the devotee is undefiled by Maya or worldly things. *Sahaj* also implies contentment and desirelessness. Man is, in essence, divine, and no sooner he realises this than he wishes to merge into the Universal source. The wall of egoism is destroyed with the Guru's guidance and God's grace.

The union of man with God is like the consummation of marriage or like the confluence of two streams—*Sangam.* This union is possible, while living in the midst of worldly things and performing daily duties.

56. What is contentment ?

Contentment lies in feeling satisfied with what one has. Some people may question the value of contentment, because ambition is the ladder to progress. But surely, the more one has, the more one wants. There is no end to ambition and greed. According to Guru Nanak, greed burns like an unquenchable fire; the more it is fed, the stronger its flames rise. Avarice leads to many vices like fraud, lying and gluttony. A greedy man can never be satisfied even if he gets all that he wants. Such a man blunts his conscience and is ready to bleed his nearest and dearest ones.

Contentment implies frugality. Our wants are many, but our real needs are few. Things we can do without cannot be regarded as necessities. Peace of mind comes from the elimination of wants.

Contentment implies that life is greater than wealth or riches. After all, money is a trust and real joy lies in giving and not in receiving. Moreover, excessive wealth leads to luxury and vice.

Contentment comes when one compares one's lot with those who are less fortunate. A one-eyed man will feel happy with his lot if he compares himself to a blind man. Adversity is not a punishment but rather an opportunity for development. Moreover in poverty, there are fewer temptations and hardly any flatterers.

A contented man accommodates himself to any adverse circumstance, be it poverty, distress or sickness. These are accepted as normal events of life. A discontented man increases his misery by comparing his lot with the more fortunate ones.

Contentment leads to submission to the Divine will. A true Sikh accepts all that comes to him with gratitude and joy. Guru Arjan says : "Without contentment, it is

impossible to acquire peace of mind." Peace and happiness come naturally to a stable mind.

57. What is humility ?

God is the Father of all the human beings and to slight or insult anyone is to injure the God in every soul. Guru Arjan says :

"Know that God dwells in all souls,
And so become the dust of the feet of all."

The antidote for the poison of pride is humility.

The five organs of the senses—eyes, mouth, ears, nose and hands—are located in the upper portion of the body and easily taken in by sin. Feet which are located in the lower part are seldom used in wickedness. In India the feet are respected and touched at the time of salutation.

The vain and the arrogant challenge their peers and bosses. They seldom realise that there are other people who are better or abler than them. They lack the feeling of brotherliness. It is the feeling of human fellowship which makes one treat every one with decency and consideration.

The Sikh Gurus have set many examples of meekness and humility. When the old Guru Amardas was kicked by Datu, he never showed resentment but humbly admitted that his hard bones must have caused hurt to Datu's feet. Similarly Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's son, asked Guru Ramdas in a humorous vein why he had kept such a long and flowing beard. The Guru replied : "Just to wipe the dust of your holy feet." Sri Chand was much impressed by the Guru's humility. Humility implies the elimination of the ego. It is the ego which is the barrier to self-knowledge and salvation. Pride is eliminated by the Guru's word. Guru Arjan says :

"Consider yourself the humblest of the humble."

In fact the humble are great and are considered superior in God's court. True humility leads to surrender to God's will and the ultimate merger of the individual into Divinity.

58. What is renunciation ?

Renuniciation of the world—*Tyaga*—is regarded by Hinduism as one of the ways of spiritual attainment. Many devotees leave their homes and go to jungles to practise austerities. This approach is disregarded in Sikhism, because this way of renunciation is not practical in *Kalyuga*. How will the world be served if pious people retire to mountain fastness and lend no helping hand in the solution of problems of the day ? Guru Nanak remonstrated the monks of the Himalayas, because the mind does not get peace in physical solitude; rather it wanders away to the missing worldly possessions and interests.

The Gurus recommended renunciation in the midst of life—*Grahast-mai-udas*. Renunciation of evil desires and not cessation of work or retirement is the true way Guru Arjan says : "Renunciation of lust, anger, attachment is praiseworthy." The true Sikh is a real *Sanyasi*. He lives desireless in the midst of worldly possessions and associations. He does the daily routine and yet keeps himself free from the attachment of the world. As such, he is neither depressed by worldly afflictions nor elated by gains or attainments. Like the lotus flower, he is not affected by the level of worldly things.

True renunciation is a mental attitude of detachment. Guru Nanak says,

"Do your daily duties with hands and feet,

But concentrate on the Lord."

Just as a mother who is busy in her household work

keeps thinking of the child lying in the cradle, in the same way, the true devotee may be apparently busy in his office and yet engrossed in the Name. Guru Gobind Singh explains the point in these words ;

"O, my soul practise renunciation in this way,
Consider thy house as a forest and yourself as an ascetic,
Let continence be thy matted hair,
And communion with God thy ablutions."

Real renunciation is the practical application of the Sikh way of life—a life of meditation and service of mankind.

59. What is the place of sacred music—Kirtan—in Sikhism?

Sacred music, Kirtan, means singing the praises of God. It is a kind of devotional music. Generally in the Gurdwara, the musician either sings alone or requests the *Sangat* to repeat the lines of the hymn in chorus. The latter is congregational hymn-singing and has a soothing effect on the mind. The Sikh sacred music—*Gurmat Sangeet*—falls into two categories : classical music and folk music. The classical tradition was pruned of ornamentation to suit the requirements of devotional music. Folk music includes *vars* in the ballad form which enshrins the praise of God.

The Sikh Gurus composed hymns to be sung according to certain musical scores. These scores were suited to the spirit and the content of the hymn. The best way to sing a hymn is to do so in its own *Raga* and according to the musical notation. The Sikh Gurus harmonised the contents of poetry with the characteristics of the *Raga*. 31 Ragas have been used in the *Granth*.

Guru Nanak advised hymn-singing at dawn, because in that period of silence, the mind is receptive to the soft

strains of music and the surrounding atmosphere of stillness helps the absorption of the healing power of *Nam*. According to the Gurus, Kirtan is the food of soul. It is a permanent treasure which can never be depleted. Whoever performs Kirtan or listens to it gets near God. His troubles and miseries vanish and his mind gains peace and equipoise.

Guru Nanak encouraged his companion—Mardana—to do Kirtan at all times. Guru Amardas wanted the *Sangat* to join in group-singing. Though there are professional singers, the best Kirtan is one in which the entire *Sangat* sings in chorus, because this divine food is needed by everyone. The Sikh prays for the strength to sing God's praises.

The slow and deep strains of music please the soul like the gentle drops of rain. The soul drinks the nectar to its fill and is engrossed in the divine Name. Devotional music in India would not have reached its highest watermark, but for the hymns of the *Granth*.

60. What are the stages in spiritual development, according to Sikhism ?

Spiritual attainment is a matter of personal development. Much depends on the amount of effort—*Sadhana*—the devotee puts in. The meditation on the Name, the company of saints, the performance of good and noble deeds indeed help one on the spiritual plane.

Guru Nanak has mentioned five stages of spiritual growth in the *Japji*. The first stage is the region of duty—*Dharam Khand*—where man does actions and reaps the consequences. Those who carry out their duties sincerely and honestly enter the second region—the region of knowledge—*Gian Khand*. Here the devotee obtains the knowledge of God and the universe. He knows his own limi-

tations and the omnipotence of God and the vastness of His creation. He realises that there is some purpose behind creation. Then he enters the third stage—the region of effort—*Saram Khand*—where his mind and understanding are purified. Such effort leads him to the next region—the region of grace—*Karam Khand.* Here the selfless devotee aquires divine graces and gets all the spiritual powers. With the grace of God he enters the next stage—the region of truth—*Sach Khand*—where he unites with Him. Such is the progress of man from the worldly plane to the spiritual plane. Undoubtedly, morality is a great help in spiritual progress.

In Sikhism, the grace of Guru or God is necessary to help the pilgrim on the spiritual path. It may be possible for an ordinary person to walk steadily on his own, but if he is primed with another personality, possessing dynamic powers, he can gather momentum to go forward. The care and tutelage of the Guru protects him from many untoward calamities and brings him unscathed through many crises.

Guru Nanak laid down the code of spiritual discipline in the penultimate verse of the *Japji.* The devotee must exercise control over the mind and body, strive sincerely to march on the spiritual path, use his reason when confronted with any problem, fear no one and ceaselessly repeat the divine Name. Such a person will radiate joy and peace to all people who come near him.

61. What is the mission of the Khalsa ?

The Khalsa was the creation of Guru Gobind Singh. The ten Gurus had given more than 200 years' training to the Sikhs and wanted to demonstrate the type of God-man who would be perfect in all respects. He would be a model of *Bhakti* and *Shakti.* Guru Gobind Singh gave

the Khalsa *Amrit*—the baptism of the sword. He knelt before the *Panj Piyara* and begged for *Amrit*. He said that the Khalsa was his physical form and the embodiment of all that is best in the Sikh religion. He gave them the uniform of the five symbols and the five *Banis*. They were the saint-soldiers devoted to the service of mankind.

The baptism of the sword was meant to create fearlessness in the Sikhs. They were enjoined to carry the *Kirpan*, for purposes of defence and for the uprooting of evil. This mission of the defence of the weak and the down-trodden gave an impetus to the spirit of service and sacrifice. The Khalsa had to meet the need of the times—to protect the weak against the oppression of Moghul rulers. History shows how the Sikhs bore the brunt of the Moghul tyranny and indignation. The two holocausts-*Chotta Ghallughara* of June, 1746, when more than ten thousand Sikhs were butchered, and *Vada Ghallughara* of February 1762 when more than thirty thousand Sikhs were killed—clearly demonstrated that the Khalsa was ever ready to meet the challenge of the bigoted Muslim rulers. In the freedom struggle (1931—1947), the Khalsa gave a good account of itself. During the Chinese invasion of 1962 and Indo-Pak wars of September, 1965 and December 1971, the Sikhs won many official awards for rare heroism.

Some people affirm that the Khalsa was created only to meet the needs of the time. This is not correct. The Khalsa was intended to perpetuate the ideal of the godly warrior—the saint-soldier—which Nanak and Gobind Singh had in mind. Here was a harmonious development of physical and spiritual personality within the *Grihst Ashram*. Here the best of the characters of the past and the present were mixed together to create a man of the future—the Khalsa—dedicated to the glory of God and the freedom and dignity of man. Undoubtedly, the Khalsa will come to the forefront in meeting any future crisis in India.

62. Are the five symbols really necessary ?

It has been found that the maintenance of forms and symbols is essential not only for the sake of uniformity but also for sustaining sufficient amount of enthusiasm for an organisation. Such symbols should be a living index of the idea, arousing deep intimations of the personality that created them. The symbols make the ideal more real and meaningful to the followers.

The Sikh symbols were not intended to create a spirit of *exclusiveness or chosen people*. They were meant to serve as aids to the corporate life of the community. Perhaps it may be possible for a man to devote himself to God without adopting outer forms and symbols, but if he wants to work in an organisation, he must keep up the disciplinary forms of the group. Just as we may have a good fighter without military drill and uniform, but that does not minimise the need of the regular army, in the same way, the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh stick to the uniform and the symbols ordained by him and find them a great aid in the Panthic organisation.

It has been recorded in history that whenever Guru Gobind Singh was pleased with anyone, he welcomed him to the fold of the Khalsa. Lachman Bairagi became Banda Singh. It is said that more than eighty thousand Sikhs received the baptism by the sword within a few months of the creation of the Khalsa.

The symbols have kept the Sikhs united. They have also maintained their ideals unsullied in great crises. Many Sikhs faced death but refused to shave off their hair—*Kesh*—which is the most important symbol of the five. The maintenance of unshorn hair is in keeping with the idea of living according to the will of God. The *Kesh* are the spiritual link with the Guru-power.

Along with the maintenance of five symbols, an exemplary life—*Rahat*—is quite essential. Abstinence from

tobacco, *Halal* meat, wines, narcotics and adultery is a part of the discipline of the Khalsa. Undoubtedly, the code of conduct is a difficult one Guru Gobind Singh valued the form of the Khalsa, and so long as the Khalsa maintains the symbols, it will march to glory; when it shows indifference to them, its lustre will tarnish and fade away.

63. What is the significance of the five symbols ?

When Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa Panth in 1699, he ordered them to maintain the five symbols—*Panj Kakar*. These symbols were not only necessary for the strength and uniformity of the organisation, but also for the value they had in their own right. Let us examine the significance of each symbol.

Hair—*Kesh*—have been regarded as a symbol of saintliness and *Dharma* in ancient times. The biblical story of Samson Agonistes shows that hair are a source of strength and vitality. Guru Nanak started the practice of keeping hair unshorn. His son Sri Chand, the founder of the Udasi sect also ordered his followers to maintain long hair. The keeping of hair is regarded as an indication of living in harmony with the will of God. The shaving of hair may be construed as interference in nature's way and considering oneself wiser than God. The keeping of hair is the most important symbol. The Khalsa becomes an apostate—*Patit*—if he shaves or trims hair.

The comb—*Kanga*—is necessary for keeping the hair clean and tidy. This is the second symbol.

Knickers—*Kachh*—has been regarded as a symbol of chastity. Moreover, it ensures briskness of movement in times of action. It is just an easy and economic underwear at the time of rest. It serves also as a mark of perpetual readiness and agility.

Sword—*Kirpan*—is an emblem of courage and adventure. In order to have self-respect, the Khalsa should possess the means of vindicating his honour. The sword is to be used primarily for purposes of defence and not offence. The possession of the sword makes the Khalsa a brotherhood of arms.

Bracelet—*Kara*—is a symbol of restraint or bondage, reminding the Sikh that he is a bond—slave of the Guru. When the Sikh looks at the bracelet, he will think twice before doing an evil deed. These symbols are essential for preserving the corporate life of the community and fostering the sentiment of brotherhood. They make a Khalsa look exactly like Guru Gobind Singh and they prompt him to behave like the Guru.

64. Is holy company (Satsang) necessary ?

In Sikhism, great emphasis is laid on *Satsang*. By joining the congregational prayers and contacts with saints, the devotee gets divine knowledge. The inspiration given by good people leads to the development of spiritual personality. The holy people preach purity through personal example and kindle the heart with universal love. They warn the individual of the five great vices. Psychologically, association of holy men acts as a deterrent against evil thoughts and evil deeds. Just as a tree which grows near the sandal-wood tree acquires the fragrance of sandal, just as a metal when touched with the philosopher's stone is transmuted into gold, in the same way, an ordinary man becomes noble and heroic in the company of holy men. In the company of the truthful, the devotee learns the value of Truth.

The company of saints is also conducive to the discipline of the mind. One learns how to serve the community and work for the good of humanity. He acquires the

technique of the Name and enjoys inner tranquillity. According to Guru Nanak, "The company of saints is the school of the Guru where one learns godly attributes." On the other hand, evil is purged and destroyed, as if by a divine spark. Guru Arjan says, "The society of saints removes the sins; the society of saints brings comforts in this world and the next."

Again and again, in the *Adi Granth*, the Sikh is required to seek the company of noble souls. A man is known by the company he keeps. In good company, he becomes good and sheds off his evil tendencies. He will feel ashamed of doing anything which may bring him reproach or blame.

Moreover, man's actions are motivated by the herd instinct. He does certain actions as a matter of social convention, but if his society becomes an instrument of his progress, he can rise to great heights. For this reason, the Sikh in his daily prayers—*Ardas*—seeks the company of the holy and contact with virtuous men—*Sadh ka sang, Gurmukh da-mel.*

65. How should we treat the apostates—Patits ?

The weak followers of any religion are likely to renounce their faith under fear or temptation. It is, therefore, necessary to accept only those adherents who have a firm and sincere belief in the basic articles of a religion.

It has been observed that some Sikhs become apostates —*Patits*—on account of bad company, or for one reason or another when they go to foreign countries. Some people in England told me that they shaved off, because they could not get employment. This is not quite true, because many *Keshadhari* Sikhs are able to get decent jobs. It all depends on the qualifications of the individual Sikh. Perhaps some Sikhs shaved off, because they had

fallen into the company of foreign girls and wanted to appear more acceptable to them. But all this is due to an inherent weakness.

Much depends on the strength and vitality of the individual's faith. Recently, a Sikh bus-conductor in England won the right of wearing the turban while on duty. Another Sikh who was not admitted to a recreation club received an apology from the management. If the Sikhs in the West stick to their forms and symbols, the turban and the beard will be respected in due course.

The reclamation of apostates should be given the highest priority in any programme of spiritual uplift. The apostates may be persuaded to realise their shortcomings and weaknesses and convinced of the need to repentance and turning over a new leaf.

According to the *Rahatnama*, the Khalsa must maintain his tradition and individuality :

"So long as the Khalsa remains distinct,
His glory and lustre will grow.
Once he adopts dubious ways,
It will not be possible to trust him."

Many apostates, in the heart of their hearts, realise that they have done wrong to themselves and the community, but do not have the moral courage to own their weaknesses. The only approach to *Patits* can be one of education and assistance to facilitate their return to the fold of Sikhism. Given a measure of understanding and sympathy, they are likely to react favourably to rapproachement by reponsible Sikhs.

66. Are there castes among the Sikhs ?

Five hundred years ago, Guru Nanak introduced the concept of a casteless society. The Hindus rigidly adhered

to the caste system which divided the community into water-tight compartments. This not only prevented social intercourse but also encouraged fatalism.

According to Guru Nanak, no man is born high or low. Taking the image of the potter's wheel, Guru Arjan compared the different kinds of people to vessels of many types and patterns, but all made of clay. In spite of religious and social distinctions, mankind is one and indivisible.

Many Indian saints and *Bhagats* belonged to low castes, but this did not stand in the way of their spiritual attainment. They are revered and worshipped on account of their saintliness. God's Name burns away all impurities and ennobles the individual.

According to Guru Nanak, caste is humbug. He writes : "From one Light the whole world came into being; so, who is good and who is bad ?" Caste is a man-made division for selfish ends. According to Hinduism, one belonging to a low caste was not regarded as worthy of religious instruction. Moreover, his birth determined his status and he could not change it. This was against the Guru's basic belief in the right of every individual to social and spiritual uplift.

A man is high or low according to his action. He is really depressed who forgets the Lord. When Guru Nanak was asked about his caste, he replied. "I belong to the lowest among the low castes." Kabir challenged the Brahmins and inquired if they were not born in the same way as men of the so-called low castes. Moreover, caste is of no consequence either in the next world or in the court of God.

Any consideration of caste in matters of matrimony should be discouraged. Caste distinctions were abolished by Guru Gobind Singh. When the disciple becomes a

Khalsa, he renounces his previous caste and becomes a member of a casteless society :

"The caste of all mankind is one and the same."

67. Is there any organised priesthood in Sikhism ?

Guru Amardas organised the propagation of the Sikh faith. He divided the country into 22 dioceses—*Manjis*—each under the charge of a devout Sikh. Daily *Kirtan* was held in such congregations called *Sangats*. The Guru himself trained 146 travelling missionaries including some women who moved into different parts of India to preach Sikhism.

The missionaries called *massands* collected offerings from the Sikhs for the Guru, but sometimes misappropriated them for their personal use. In course of time, they became powerful as a separate group and started harassing the poor and innocent Sikhs. They moved about like *Jagirdars* and *Zamindars*, with full pomp and pageantry, accompanied by their servants and retainers.

Guru Gobind Singh received several complaints regarding the misdeeds of the *massands*, from Sikhs living in differents parts of India. He looked into the complaints made against each one. The guilty were duly punished and the order of *massands* was abolished.

Professional priesthood does not exist in any form among the Sikhs. The idea of clericalism as opposed to secularism, of a different morality for the churchman and for the layman has no place in Sikhism. There are neither hereditary priests nor monks. Sikhism does not prescribe a particular dress or uniform for a saint. It also does not enforce the vow of celibacy. In the temples, any one can perform the duties of *Kirtan* and *Katha*. The person known as *Granthi* is merely a reader of Granth. He may be called a sort of *Patthi*. The Kirtan-groups

generally consist of amateurs. Even those who are professionally-trained as singers cannot be accepted as priests, because there is no such office or designation.

Moreover, women are allowed to take part in *Kirtan* and *Katha* on equal terms with the male folk. They may participate in all the ceremonials like baptism, marriage and funeral. The readings from the Granth are common on all such functions.

It may be noted that almost the entire body of Sikhs is under a sacred duty to impart the knowledge of their religion to the rest of the world.

68. What is the Sikh baptism—Amrit ?

Baptism is necessary for joining the Sikh organisation Guru Gobind Singh initiated the practice with the establishment of the order of the Khalsa in 1699.

The *Amrit* ceremony (baptism) is held in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Five good baptised Sikhs called *Panj Piyaras*, wearingt the five symbols—Kesh (long hair) Kangna (Comb), Kachha (Knickers), Kara (Iron bracelet) and Kirpan (Sword) sit in front of the Granth. One of the five explains the principles of Sikhism to those who want to be baptised. After the candidates have signified their acceptance, one of the five offers *Ardas.* Then all the five sit round an iron-vessel containing fresh water and a quantity of sweets—*Patasas.* They recite the five *Banis*—the *Japji*, *Jap*, ten *Swayyas*, *Chaupai* and *Anand Sahab*. The reciter stirs the water with a double-edged sword, *Khanda*, which he holds in his right hand. After recitation is over, the five initiators stand up, holding the vessel in their hands. One of them offers prayer for the nectar just prepared,

Each candidate receives five handfuls of Amrit (holy water) which he drinks shouting *Wahguruji ka Khalsa Wah-*

guruji ki Fateh. The Amrit is put five times in his eyes and hair while he repeats the above greeting. The Amrit that remains is sipped by all candidates to remove the caste prejudices. The five initiators utter *Mul mantra* five times which is repeated by the candidates. Then one of the five explains the vows of Sikh discipline—*Rahat.* The candidates regard themselves as sons of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Kaur. Their home is Anandpur Sahib. They are to abstain from four misdeeds : removal of hair, eating of *halal* meat, adultery and tobacco. One of the five then offers *ardas* and reads a passage from the *Granth.* Those who adopt Sikhism for the first time receive a new name. All the baptised Sikhs then eat *Karah Parsad* from the same vessel. If a Sikh has done any of the four misdeeds—*Kurahts*—mentioned above, he has to be rebaptised after due punishment and confession in the holy congregation.

69. What is Anand Marriage ?

The Anand form of marriage which was given a statutory recognition in 1909, under the Anand Marriage Act, has been observed since the early days of Sikhism. Sikh boys and girls are married according to this form when they are grown-up and fit to undertake matrimonial responsibilities.

The marriage ceremony is simple but impressive. The bride and the bridegroom along with their relatives and friends form a congregation with the Granth Sahib in their midst. The couple and their parents stand up and an *Ardas* is offered seeking God's blessings. The person in charge of the function addresses the bride and the bridegroom individually and explains to them their duties in the new life they are about to enter. Anand marriage is a sacrament. The Guru is a witness to the

marriage. No writing or document is necessary. The bridegroom is to vow fidelity to the wife—*Istribrat Dharam* while the bride is to vow fidelity to her husband—*Patibrat Dharam*. The husband is to protect the life and honour of his wife, while she is to remain content with the lot of her husband and the treatment in the husband's house. The couple signify their consent by bowing before Guru Granth Sahib. Then the scarf of the bridegroom is placed in the hands of bride. The *Granthi* or the officiating person reads the *lavans*—the epithalamium of Guru Ramdas. Each stanza explains in detail a stage in the development of a life of love. The first stage is the performance of duties to the family and the community. The second stage is that of selfless love and holy fear which provide opportunities for devoted service and sacrifice—the discipline needed to facilitate the feeling of one spirit in two bodies. The second stage is that of love of yearning and enthusiasm. Even troubles provide opportunities for service and sacrifice and are therefore helpful to love. The third stage is that of restraint: *Vairag*. Self-control keeps love in balance. The fourth stage is that of harmony or union. The bride and bridegroom are completely identified with each other.

After the reading of each stanza, the couple goes round the Granth Sahib, the bridegroom leading the bride, while the stanza is sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. After the reading of *lavans*, *Anand Sahib* is read. After *Ardas*, *Karah Prasad* is distributed to all present. Monogamy is practised by the Sikhs.

70. What is the basic creed of the Sikhs ?

The basic creed of the Sikhs—*Mul Mantra*—gives the idea of Reality in a few telling words. The creed is : *Ekoankar*, *Satnam*, *Karta Purkh*, *Nirbhav*, *Nirvair*, *Akal Murat*,

Ajoni, Suabhav, Gur Parsad. In these words, Guru Nanak praises God and mentions some of His great characteristics : He is Truth, Self created, beyond the limits of time and who can be realised through the grace of the Guru. Let us study the meaning of each word of the *Mul Mantra.*

(*a*) *Ekoankar* : His name is God, only one who is ever the same. He is the Absolute—the Transcendental. As such, He is Unknowable, Unfathomable. He is beyond description and beyond human comprehension.

(*b*) *Satnam* : His name is real. He really exists. He is not an idea or a hypothesis or an illusion. As one who exists, He is ever changing. He is never the same, evolving and growing. Everything exists in Him and is caused by Him. His name is Truth.

(*c*) *Karta Purkh* : He is the Creator of the cosmos. He is responsible for the coming into existence of the whole universe.

(*d*) *Nirbhay* : He is fearless. He is afraid of no one because He is the Lord of the universe.

(*e*) *Nirvair :* He is without any enmity. His love and protection extend to all. This cuts at the root of the theory of the chosen prophets and the chosen people. Like God, a true Sikh must be fearless and impartial. This will help to establish equality and justice.

(*f*) *Akal Murat* : He is Timeless. He is not subject to death.

(*g*) *Ajoni* : He is unborn. God does not take birth in any sort of manner. This is the very antithesis of the theory of incarnation.

(*v*) *Suabhav* : He is self-existent. He is unique in His own right.

(*vi*) *Gur Prasad* : By the grace of the Guru the Sikh can acquire the knowledge of God.

The short form of the creed is *Enoankar Satgur Parsad* as used in the *Adi Granth*.

71. What is the Temple of Bread—Langar ?

The institution of free kitchen or the "temple of bread," as Puran Singh called it, was started by Guru Nanak. He desired that every Sikh should share his food with others—*Wand Chakna*—and his kitchen should be open to all. Subsequently, the *Langar* took an institutional shape and became a part of the Sikh temple. This community kitchen is meant for providing food to all devotees and pilgrims. Every Sikh is expected to contribute to it either by donating food stuffs or by participating in the cooking and distribution of food.

Guru Nanak set up the temple of bread at Kartarpur where people brought corn and fuel and worked for the common meal of the community. Guru Angad extended the *Langar* and personally served in it. Guru Amardas turned it into an institution and ordered that all who came to see him must eat in *Langar*. Even Emperor Akbar and the Raja of Haripur had to sit on the floor with the common people and take meals with them. Apart from promoting social equality, the *Langar* eliminated taboos about *chauka*—the preparation of food in special enclosure. The scope of Langar was widened by Guru Ramdas who ordered that water and meals be served to travellers and squatters. Guru Arjan and his wife personally served water to the *Sangat*. They even massaged the weary travellers and fanned them to sleep.

Many of the Sikhs started their own *Langars* at Anandpur. One day Guru Gobind Singh went out *in*

cognito for an inspection of *Langars.* He found out that Bhai Nandlal maintained the *Langar* well, while others were indifferent to the needs of poor Sikhs. He warned them and remarked : "The mouths of the poor are Guru's, receptacles of gifts."

According to Prof. Puran Singh, "What is a home, but a hospitable feasting of children with bread and love and faith ?" What is spiritual life in the temple of flesh, without a full meal first. The very first temple made by Guru Nanak, therefore, was the Temple of Bread or Guru's *Langar.*

72. What is the scope of comprehensive discipline in a Sikh's life ?

In personal life a true Sikh has to follow a threefold discipline : the discipline of the Word, the discipline of the Sacrament and the discipline of Service.

The discipline of the *word* implies that the Sikh must rise early in the morning, say at about 4 a. m. and take a bath and then meditate on the Name. He has to read the five *Banis* : *Japji, Jap Sahab,* Ten *Swayyas, Rahras* and *Anand Sahab.* He must also visit the Gurdwara daily. If possible, he must sing the hymns and read the *Granth.*

The discipline of the *sacrament* implies that the Sikh must follow the Sikh ceremonies at the time of birth, marriage and death in the family. On all such occasions, he must conduct himself with dignity and equipoise and offer prayers suitable to the occasion.

The discipline of *service* implies that the Sikh must serve his fellow-men to demonstrate his love of God. In the sphere of service, barriers of caste or creed or race are ignored. *Gurdwaras* are places for service of the *Sangat.* The Sikh may sweep the floor, cleanse the utensils, polish

the shoes or serve water. *Langar* provides an extensive field of service. The Sikh may contribute food-stuffs and provisions, pay for fuel or utensils, fetch water or lend a helping hand in the cooking and distribution of food.

In corporate life, a Sikh is expected to do his duty to the community. He must take *Amrit* (Baptism) and help in administering it to others. He ought to join the congregation—*Sangat*, and assist a *Panthic* meeting in arriving at a decision—*Gurumata*. He must also readily submit to disciplinary action in case of a misdeed or act of indiscipline. In short, he must take an active part in the corporate life of the *Panth*. Such a Sikh earns the Guru's grace.

73. What is the routine of a Sikh ?

Practical Sikhism is based on three pragmatic concepts : *Nam Japna*, *Kirt Karna* and *Wand Chakna*. This three-fold path signifies the remembrance of the Name, doing honest labour for a living and sharing one's earnings with others. This is to be practised in daily life.

Guru Amardas gave some tips to Bhai Budha regarding an ideal Sikh's life. Some of the points are mentioned below :

The Sikh should serve the people and not touch money or property belonging to others. Let him share his joys and sorrows with his neighbours. He should eat only when he feels hungry and sleep only when he feels sleepy. Let him resign himself to the will of God and never find fault with the doing of his Creator. He should keep away from lust, anger and greed. Let him not boast of his goodness or kindness. He must practise charity and personal cleanliness. He should not tolerate the calumny of the Gurus. In short let him mould his life and conduct according to the Guru's words.

Guru Ramdas laid down the following routine of a true Sikh. Let the Sikh get up at dawn and after bathing, meditate on the Divine Name. He should continue his meditation till sunrise. Then he must go out to earn his daily bread by honest means. Let his calling or work be such that it keeps him away from unfair and untruthful means. Let him repeat the Name or *Gurbani* while working or walking. After his day's work, let him again offer prayers before retiring for the night. The Guru seeks the dust of the feet of those who remember God's name and persuade others to repeat the Name.

The pattern of life is that of a house-holder : *Grahastmaiudas*. The devotee must remain contented and desireless while leading his life as a citizen. Let him raise himself above wordly temptations and be a model for others. With Guru's grace he will lead a pious and clean life. It will be of great advantage to maintain a diary of one's daily actions. Such a practice will keep a man away from bad deeds. Moreover, whenever convenient, one should join the *Sadh Sangat* for *Kirtan* and *Katha*. Man has amassed the dust of sin through numerous lives, and as such, the cleaning process will have to be a long and arduous one.

74. Is drinking permitted in Sikhism ?

The Sikh Gurus banned the use of intoxicants including alcohol on account of its harmful effects. It is physically harmful and mentally disturbing. Man under the influence of drink loses the power of reason and normal action. Guru Amardas wrote in the Adi Granth (P. 554) against the use of wine by the Sikhs.

"One man offers wine and another pours it himself;

And it makes him crazy and senseless and devoid of all reason.

Then one cannot distinguish between one's own and another's and is cursed by God.

Drinking it, one forsake's one's Master and is punished at the Lord's Court.

Yes, drink not this vicious wine, under any circumstances."

At another place the Guru wrote that the wages of drinking is sin and vice (p. 553);

"The body is the pitcher, selfhood the wine;

And the society is of craving and the outgoings of the mind.

Yes, Desire is the drinking bowl brimming over with falsehood;

And *Yama* is the bar-man.

Drinking such a wine, O, who will earn anything but Vice and Sin ?"

Guru Gobind Singh in his *Rahatnama* addressed to Bhai Champa Singh banned the use of any intoxicating drink. The Sikh of the Guru should never drink any wine. (*Guru Ka Sikh Sharab Kadi Na Peevay*)

Apart from religious injunction, scientists have proved that frequent use of alcohol makes people addicts and they become aggressive and unruly. The custom of offering drinks to friends and guests is socially dangerous. Besides this, medical authorities have described the terrible effects of drink on man's general health.

Drinking damages the liver, the heart and the brain. In the United States of America "Alcoholism" is regarded as a disease to be handled by society and government.

In Persian language wine is called *Sharaab*, which literally means 'the water of mischief.'

Let the Sikhs clearly understand that drinking is under no circumstances permitted in Sikh Religion. The clear command in Sri Guru Granth Sahab and *Rehat Maryada* bans the use of any intoxicants by any Sikh.

IV. Sikh History

75. What was the mission of Guru Nanak ?

Guru Nanak was born in Talwandi, a Punjab village, in 1469 at a critical period of Indian history. The Lodi rulers wallowed in luxury and cared not for the affairs of the State and welfare of their subjects. Their weakness and sloth brought Babar on the Indian scene. Guru Nanak protested against foreign domination and warned the rulers that if they did not look into the grievances of the people, they would meet the punishment they deserved.

Guru Nanak challenged the fanaticism and intolerance of the Muslims of his time. During his visit to Mecca, he made the *Kazi* realise that God's house is everywhere and not only in direction of the *Kaaba*. Similarly Guru Nanak exposed the meaningless ritual and the caste prejudices prevalent among the Hindus. He demonstrated to them the fallacy of feeding Brahmins at the time of the performance of the *Sharaadha*. At Hardwar, in a very amusive manner, he exposed the folly of offering water to the manes of the ancestors.

Guru Nanak's life may be divided into three parts. The first period of 30 years was spent at Talwandi and Sultanpur as a householder. The second period of 22 years was utilised in missionary travels far and wide. The third and last period of 18 years was spent at Kartarpur for the benefit of his followers. He established places of worship and *Dharmsalas*. Wherever he went, he urged the people to perform acts of charity and render service to the poor and the needy.

Guru Nanak propagated the equality of man. He treated Hindus and Muslims alike. He went to their important shrines and showed them the true way of spiritual life. He opposed the distinctions of caste. He called himself a member of the lowest caste.

Guru Nanak insisted on *Grahstha*—the householder's life. The path of renunciation or *Sanyas* is the way of escapism and defeat. Man must do his worldly duties and at the same time keep his spirit detached from worldly things.

Finding that his end was approaching, Guru Nanak tested his disciples and passed on the *Gurudom* to the worthy of them, Guru Angad, in 1539.

76. What do you know of Guru Angad?

Guru Angad (1504-52) previously known as Lehna was a worshipper of the goddess Jawala Mukhi. Once while going to the shrine of his goddess, he came in contact with Guru Nanak. There was spontaneous conversion. He chose to serve the Guru. He became the Guru's best and obedient follower After testing him along with others, Guru Nanak nominated him to the *Gadi* in 1539.

Guru Angad popularised the *Gurmukhi* script introduced by his predecessor. He broke the Brahmin's monopoly of learning by encouraging all sorts of people to learn *Punjabi* and read religious literature. He gathered the facts about Guru Nanak's life from Bala and wrote the first biography of Guru Nanak Dev. He also set up religious centres where the principles of Sikhism could be propagated.

Guru Angad extended the *Langar*—the free kitchen—and personally looked after the serving arrangements. The *Langar* was intended to break caste barriers and social taboos. Guru Angad laid stress on the equality of man:

"It is like clay of which pots are made
In diverse shapes and forms—yet the clay is the same.
So are the bodies of men made of five elements,
How can one amongst them be high and the other low ?"

The *Langar* brought people of different castes on one and the same platform and provided a healthy field for charity and service.

Guru Angad was very fond of children. He started a school for young boys and taught them *Punjabi.* He also insisted on physical fitness. Rural sports and games followed the religious congregations. This tradition helped subsequently in enlisting able-bodied men for the Sikh army.

Guru Angad led a life of piety and service at Khandur. Here Amardas—a relative of his—served him day and night. The Guru bypassed his sons who were disobedient and nominated Amardas as his successor in 1552.

77. What do you know of Guru Amardas ?

Guru Amardas (1479—1575) earned the succession by selfless services at the age of 73. Guru Angad's son, Datu, was enraged at this and kicked Guru Amardas. Guru Amardas did not take it ill but rather apologised to him, saying, "Pardon me; my hard bones must have hurt your foot." This showed the Guru's great humility and wisdom.

Guru Amardas paid serious attention to the propagation of Sikhism. He appointed a devout Sikh in charge of each region. The total number of such dioceses was 22. The Guru also trained a number of travelling missionaries who spread the message of Sikhism in different parts of India. In order to bring the Sikhs closer

to one another, he fixed three festivals—*Diwali*, *Baisakhi* and *Maghi*—when all could assemble in a sort of religious conference.

It is said that the followers of Srichand, son of Guru Nanak, who had started the *Udasi* sect and had advocated renunciation of home and property came to Guru Amardas for consultations. He advised them to lead a life of renunciation in the midst of the home. He explained it as a compromise between asceticism and worldly enjoyment. The householder's life was indeed the best life, because it, offered an easy way for the common man—Remembrance of God, sharing of food and income and honest living—*Name japna*, *Wand chhakna* and *Dharam-di-kirt*. The Guru started a new centre of worship at Goindwal where he got a well dug for the benefit of the people..

Guru Amardas was very friendly to Emperor Akbar. The Emperor came to pay respects to Guru Amardas at Goindwal and according to custom took meals in the *Langar*. He was very much impressed by the universal message of Sikhism and the free kitchen.

Guru Amardas, in the tradition of Guru Nanak, tested his disciples for nominating a successor. He found in his son-in-law, Bhai Jetha, a devoted and humble Sikh. He therefore installed him as Guru Ramdas in 1574.

78. What do you know of Guru Ramdas ?

Guru Ramdas (1534—1581) was installed as Guru at the age of forty. He put missionary work on sound basis and sent *massands* to different parts of north India to propagate the message of Sikhism. He himself was fond of serving his disciples. Sometimes he would distribute water or pull the fan for the *Sangat*.

Guru Ramdas was keen on giving a suitable centre of worship to the Sikhs. He developed the land given to his wife by Emperor Akbar and established a new township called Ramdaspur. Many Sikhs settled in the new town because it was situated on the trade routes. The city was subsequently called Amritsar.

Guru Ramdas was a perfect example of humility and piety. Once Sri Chand—the son of Guru Nanak—visited him. He asked the Guru in a vein of humour as to why he had maintained a long and flowing beard. The Guru gave him an apt reply : "To wipe the dust of your holy feet." Sri Chand was deeply moved by this answer and expressed regret for his indiscretion.

The Guru's mission spread quickly both among the poor and the rich classes. Some of the aristocrats visited Amritsar and became his followers. The Guru turned his friendship with Emperor Akbar to good account by persuading him to relieve distress and to stamp out corruption prevalent among government officials.

Arjan, the youngest son of Guru Ramdas was devoted to the Guru. At the bidding of his father, he went to Lahore to attend a marriage. He was feeling terribly depressed without his father. He wrote two urgent poetic letters, full of longing and love for the Guru :

"My soul yearns for the sight of the Guru.

It bewails like the *Chatrik* crying for the rain."

These letters were intercepted by his elder brother Prithi Chand. When the third letter reached Guru Ramdas, he immediately called him. Prithi Chand was keen on the succession, but the Guru tested his sons and followers and finally his choice fell on Guru Arjan who was installed as the fifth Guru in 1581.

79. What do you know of Guru Arjan ?

Guru Arjan (1563—1606) was in his teens when he was installed as Guru. He developcd Amritsar as a centre of industry and culture for the Sikhs. He requested Mian Mir—a Muslim divine—to lay the foundation stone for *Har Mandar* (Temple of God). The temple was built on a level lower than the surrounding land, in the middle of a beautiful tank. This is popularly known as the Golden Temple.

In order to put this township on a sound basis, the Guru helped the establishment of new trades and professions. Some of these trades were banking, embroidery, carpentry and horsedealing. Amritsar was centrally situated and there was enough scope for commercial relations with neighbouring countries. The Sikhs were sent to Afghanistan and Central Asia for buying good horses. The trade in horses gave Sikhs a taste for riding and horsemanship.

Guru Arjan felt that the Sikhs should have their scripture. He collected the hymns of the first four Gurus and of Indian *Bhagats* and *mystics*. He dictated the hymns including his own to Bhai Gurdas and completed the compilation of the *Adi Granth* in 1604.

Guru Arjan was a man of the masses and wielded great influence. His growing power and prestige roused the jealousy of Emperor Jehangir. Moreover, even Muslims came to the *Har Mandar*. Jehangir resolved, to use his words, "to put an end to this traffic." He asked Guru Arjan to change the text of the Granth and to include the praise of prophet Mohammed. The Guru refused to do so. In the meantime, Chandu—the Diwan—who bore a grudge against the Guru—poisoned the mind of Jehangir with all sorts of false stories. Jehangir placed Guru Arjan under the charge of Chandu. The latter perpetrated tortures like pouring of boiling water, throwing of burning sand on the Guru. Guru Arjan bore all these tortures in a spirit of resignation.

After nominating his son Har Gobind as his successor, the Guru went to bathe in the river Ravi on 30th May, 1606. His blistered body could hardly bear the cold water and he was carried away by the current. He is the first martyr in Sikh history.

80. What do you know of Guru Har Gobind ?

Guru Har Gobind (1595—1644) took a cue from the troubled times. His father had been a victim of Mughal tyranny. The Mughal rulers wanted to break the power of the Sikhs. He, therefore, organised a small band of soldiers and trained them in warfare. Some historians call it the beginning of military theocracy.

Emperor Jehangir felt jealous of the Guru's military power and had him imprisoned in Gwalior fort. When the Guru's release was ordered, he refused to leave the fort till the other Indian princes who were also in jail were released. This was done and the Guru came to be known as *Bandhichor* or the Great Liberator.

Guru Har Gobind realised that the fight with the Mughal power would come sooner or later. He kept his small army in good trim. He himself was a great rider, hunter and swordsman. Cunnigham reports that he had 800 horses, 300 trained horse-men and 60 artillery-men. Guru Har Gobind fought three battles which were thrust on him by the Mughals. The first battle, due to the forcible capture of Guru's horses by the Governor of Lahore, was fought in 1628. The Commander of the Mughals—Mukhlis Khan—was completely routed. In the second battle near Lehra in 1631, the Guru's army was victorious. The third battle in which Painde Khan got wounded was fought at Kartarpur in 1634. The Guru's success in all three battles created confidence and courage among the Sikhs.

Guru Har Gobind's career marks a turning point in Sikh history. On account of the force of circumstances, Sikhism was becoming militant. The Guru carried two swords : one of the spiritual power—*Peeri* and the other of military power—*Meeri.* The Sikhs had thrown a challenge to the Mughal power, and raised the banner of revolt against a cruel and corrupt administration. The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan had not been in vain. The mission of the Sikhs henceforth was the liberation of the masses from religious and political tyranny. The use of the sword as means of defence and justice became popular among the Guru's followers. In 1644, Guru Har Gobind nominated Guru Har Rai as his successor.

81. What do you know of Guru Har Rai ?

Guru Har Rai (1630—1661) was installed as Guru at the age of 14. He was the grandson of Guru Har Gobind though very much unlike his military genius. Guru Har Rai was a man of peace and love. He was fond of serving the *Sangat.* He urged his followers to meditate on the hymns of the Granth and to lead a life of self-discipline.

Guru Har Rai tried to keep himself away from the intrigues of the Mughal court. Dara Shikoh came to the Guru's place and sought his blessings for success against his brother Aurangzeb. As was the tradition of the Gurus, Har Rai helped him in his distress as he would have helped any other man in difficulties. Aurangzeb captured Dara and had him executed. Emperor Aurangzeb called the Guru to his court in connection with the alleged assistance to Dara. The Guru sent his son Ram Rai to the Mughal court. He worked miracles and even changed the text of a line of the *Granth* to please the Emperor. Guru Har Rai was much displeased with Ram Rai on this account and resolved to have no dealing with him.

Guru Har Rai was a man of great charity and generosity. Once, the ancestors of the former rulers of Patiala, Nabha and Jind came to the Guru's *darbar*, crying for food and patting their bellies in token of hunger. The Guru felt pity on these poor chaps and blessed them. Soon thereafter, they acquired some territories and became Rajahs.

Guru Har Rai loved his devotees and helped them in times of need. One day Bhai Gobind of Kabul was so much engrossed in the Guru's *Darshan*, that he held the Guru love-fettered. The Guru did not leave his place for the whole day. Similarly, one morning, he went to the house of an old pious lady who had prepared loaves of bread for him with great devotion. Knowing that his end was near, the Guru installed his five-year old child Harkishan as the next Guru, early in October, 1661.

82. What do you know of Guru Harkishan ?

Guru Harkishan (1656—1664) was called upon to assume the responsibilities of the leadership of the Sikh community at the tender age of five. He is known as "child Guru" and is specially loved and cherished by children and students.

Guru Harkishan was a great genius and showed extraordinary talent at his age. Once a Brahmin questioned him about the meaning of certain difficult passages of the *Gita*. He wanted to test the intellectual powers of the Guru. The Guru did not take it ill and called a passing unlettered water-carrier to expound the meaning of those passages. The Brahmin was surprised at the extra-ordinary exposition and wisdom of the water-carrier. A Gurdwara known as 'Panjokhra Sahab" was established at this spot.

Once Raja Jai Singh felt like finding out the genius and testing the wisdom of the child Guru. He disguised

his queen as a slave and made her sit among other women. He asked the Guru to find out the queen. By his extraordinary talent, the Guru went direct to the queen dressed as a slave and sat in her lap. The Raja became a devoted disciple of the Guru.

The Guru's elder brother Ram Rai complained to Emperor Aurangzeb that he had been passed over for the succession. He claimed the right of succession as the eldest son of Guru Har Rai. The emperor called Guru Harkishan to Delhi. In response to the wishes of the *Sangat*, the Guru went to Delhi and started his mission of healing the sick. Cholera was raging in the capital at that time. The Guru brought health and happiness to many cholera-stricken people. The Guru stayed at the place where Gurdwara Bangla Sahab now stands. Soon thereafter, he fell ill. Asked about his successor, he gave a cryptic reply : "*Baba Bakale.*" He meant that the next Guru would be found in the village of Bakala. He passed away on 30th March, 1664.

83. What do you know of Guru Tegh Bahadur ?

Guru Harikishan had not specifically named anyone as the Ninth Guru There were no less than 22 imposters who called themselves *Guru* in the village of Bakala. Bhai Makhan Shah, a devout Sikh, went to Bakala to discover the real Guru. By personal testimony, he discovered Guru Tegh Bahadur and proclaimed him as the Ninth Guru in 1664.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's life (1621—1675) may be divided into three periods : the first period of 23 years spent at Amritsar along with his father, the second period of 19 years spent in quiet meditation at Bakala and the third period of 11 years utilised in travel to eastern India and his work in the Punjab.

Dhirmal, a nephew of Guru Tegh Bahadur was extremely jealous of and angry with the Guru. He wanted to kill the Guru. So he sent a number of dacoits to plunder the Guru's house. Sihan shot the Guru and injured his shoulder. The next morning, the Sikhs captured Sihan and brought him to the temple. The Guru pardoned him and set him free. The Guru said, "Forgiveness is a great virtue" He also returned the belongings of Dhirmal.

Some Kashmiri Pandits who had been told to accept Islam came to Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur. The Guru agreed to sacrifice his life for the protection of the Pandits. The Pandits sent a message to Emperor Aurangzeb that if Guru Tegh Bahadur accepted Islam, they would follow his example.

Emperor Aurangzeb ordered the imprisonment of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He told him either to accept Islam or to show a miracle. The Guru refused to do either. With regard to the performance of a miracle the Guru said, "Is this not a great miracle that the emperor forgets his own death, while inflicting it on others ?"

Aurangzeb ordered the Guru's execution. The executioner Adam Shah dealt the blow after the Guru had finished the recitation of the *Japji.* The head of the Guru fell into the lap of a Sikh who took it to Anandpur. The body was cremated by a Labana Sikh at the place where now stands Gurdwara Rakabgunj. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom is indeed unique, because he offered his life not for the preservation of Sikhism, but for the protection of Hindu religion. He is the second martyr in Sikh history.

84. What do you know of Guru Gobind Singh ?

Guru Gobind Singh (1666—1708) was installed as the Tenth Guru at the tender age of nine, soon after the

martyrdom of his father. He knew that difficult times were ahead, particularly the struggle with Mughal imperialism. He, therefore, made preparations to meet the Mughal challenge, by training his disciples in the art of warfare.

Guru Gobind Singh has four-fold achievement to his credit: (a) the crushing blow dealt to the Mughal power, (b) the creation of the Khalsa, (c) the production of creative and martial literature, (d) the installation of the *Adi Granth* as the permanent Guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh was a true patriot who upheld the dignity of man and opposed the tyranny and fanaticism of Aurangzeb. Emperor Aurangzeb made no secret of spreading Islam by force. Guru Gobind Singh, with a small band of warriors had to fight on two fronts—the hill Rajahs and the Mughal army. His victories in the battle of *Bhangani* (1687) and *Nadaun* (1689) undermined the power of the hill Rajahs and Mughals. He sacrificed his four sons, wife and mother for the sake of upholding justice and freedom. Guru Gobind Singh exposed the evil deeds of the emperor in his poetic letter to Aurangzeb, entitled *Zafarnama*.

Guru Gobind Singh was a literary giant and a patron of poets. The bards of his court composed many epics and martial verses to inspire the Sikhs to acts of glory and valour.

Guru Gobind Singh abolished the order of *massands* —the missionaries, because of their misdeeds. He further ordered the end of personal Gurudom, and declared the Granth Sahab as eternal Guru.

The creation of the Khalsa in 1699 was another feat of his genius. He conceived the idea of raising an army from men supposed to belong to lower castes and hence regarded weak and depressed. Like a true democrat he beseeched disciples to administer *Amrit* to him. Guru Gobind Singh died of a mortal wound inflicted by a

Pathan in 1708. Gurdwara Abchal Nagar was built by Raja Ranjit Singh at Nanded on the spot where the Guru left off his mortal frame.

85. What do you know of Banda Singh ?

Banda Singh (1670—1716) was born at Rajouri in Jammu State. He was known as Lachman Dev in his childhood. Soon after a hunt, he turned an ascetic : a *Bairagi*, and took the name of Madho Das. He settled down at Nanded. He became a devotee of the Guru in September 1708 and sought his blessings. Guru Gobind Singh gave him a sword, five arrows, a flag and a battle drum and asked him to follow the five commandments mentioned below.

Remain a celibate : do not marry at all.

Speak the truth and act on it.

Serve and obey the Khalsa.

Do not establish a new sect.

Be humble and not haughty.

Taking twenty-five Sikhs with him, Banda Singh proceeded to the Panjab to punish the enemies of the Khalsa. He attacked Samana in November, 1709. Thereafter, Wazir Khan the Nawab of Sarhind was killed in the battle of Chappar Chiri on 12th May, 1710.

Banda Singh was crowned at Longarh and struck coins in the name of Guru. He allowed his Muslim subjects to follow their religious customs and practices. Soon afterwards, he extended his sway over Pathankot.

The Mughal emperor was perturbed by the conquests of Banda Singh and sent a big army to crush him, Banda Singh was besieged at Gurdas Nangal. After an eight-month siege, he and his followers were captured on 7th December 1715.

Banda Singh was tortured to death on 7th June 1716. It is said that Banda Singh confessed that he deserved his fate for transgressing the commands of Guru Gobind Singh.

Banda Singh's challenge to the Mughal power showed that the Khalsa had broken the charm of Mughal invincibility. Given another chance, they could perhaps lay the foundations of the Sikh empire. The opportunity came in 1799, when Ranjit Singh established Sikh rule in the Panjab.

86. What do you know of Maharaja Ranjit Singh ?

Ranjit Singh (1780—1839) was a member of the Sukerchakria *missal*. From early childhood, he was fond of riding and hunting. Taking advantage of the unsettled conditions in the Panjab, he expelled Chet Singh of Bhangi missal from Lahore and occupied throne in 1799. He invaded Amritsar in 1802 and thereafter assumed control over Patiala and Faridkot. He crossed the Sutlej for extension of his dominion, but the Sikhs of Jind appealed to the British for help against Ranjit Singh. The British made a treaty with Ranjit Singh in 1809, declaring the Sutlej river as his frontier. In 1818, Ranjit Sigh annexed Multan and a year later, Kashmir lay at his feet. He proceeded northward and annexed Peshawar and Bannu in 1823.

Ranjit Singh is known as the lion of the Panjab. He was a born soldier and administrator. Sir Lepel Griffin called him, "the beau ideal of a soldier, strong, spare, active, courageous and enduring". He had a lot of common sense and ruled his empire with justice and wisdom. It is surprising that he abolished the death penalty in those turbulent times. He was a very tolerant ruler; the public offices were held by Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus on

equal terms. He picked up men of ability and character for administration and encouraged budding talent. His royal court was cosmopolitan in character. He employed European officers to train his army on modern lines.

Ranjit Singh was a good Sikh. He created endowments for religious uses and allotted land to Hindu, Muslim and Sikh shrines for their upkeep. Ranjit Singh was a strict disciplinarian and used to move in disguise to look after his subjects.

Ranjit Singh gave to the Panjab a good and enlightened administration. He prohibited traffic in women and children. He patronised artists and warriors. He dispensed justice impartially. Though he was fond of the joys of life, he never neglected public affairs for personal pleasure. It is rather significant that he gave a period of peace and good administration to the Panjab and for the time being checked the aggressive designs of the British power in India.

87. What do you know of Bhai Vir Singh ?

Bhai Vir Singh (1872—1957) was the most important writer and theologian in Panjabi who expounded Sikh history and philosophy for more than fifty years. He is called Bhai Gurdas of the twentieth century. His most important works are *Guru Nanak Chamatkar*, *Kalgidhar Chamatkar*, *Baba Nodh Singh* and *Meray Saeeyan Jeeo*.

Bhai Vir Singh's creative talent was recognised by the Government and the Panjab University. He was given the title of *Padam Shri* by the Government of India and a Honorary Doctorate by the Panjab University. H. Chattopadhaya called him the "sixth river in the land of the five rivers." His poetry possesses the sublimity of Milton, the spontaneity of Wordsworth, the music of

Tagore and the mysticism of Yeats. He is the finest flower of the renaissance in modern Panjab.

Bhai Vir Singh was a versatile artist. He was a poet, novelist and critic. As a poet, he finds spiritual lessons in the objects of Nature. The *Kikar Tree* is a symbol of the spiritual seeker who must face the slings and arrows of worldly people. As a devotional poet, his poetry throbs with the longing of the individual soul for the Universal soul. The hurdle between man and God is the ego. Once it is crossed, man could meet God face to face. He would find beauty and God's presence in the ordinary things of life. Man could win peace and bliss by selfcontrol and spiritual effort.

Dr. Vir Singh was a well-known historical novelist. His important works in this genre are *Sundri Bijay Singh* and *Satwant Kaur*. In view of their popularity, they have gone through many editions.

Dr. Vir Singh was a poet of man. He sang of the struggles of the village folk. He has also written poems on freedom and patriotism. Bhai Vir Singh was not only a philosopher but also a stylist. Even his prose captures the dignity and harmony of poetry. *Kalgidhar Chamatkar* is full of purple passages. A registered society—*Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan*—is now busy publishing his works and popularising them among the masses. His centenary was celebrated in India and abroad recently.

88. What do you know of Sikh Paintings ?

The Sikh school of painting is a distinct contribution to Indian art. The school originated in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was a liberal patron of arts. He employed artists for the decoration and panelling of the Golden temple, Amritsar.

According to W. G. Archer, there are three distinct branches of the Sikh school : Guler Paintings, Kangra Paintings and Lahore Paintings. Guler became a part of Ranjit Singh's kingdom in 1813. Guler artists who had worked on Rajput themes earlier, now began to experiment with Sikh themes like the portraits of Sikh Gurus and Sikh dignitaries. The Kangra painters, now that Kangra was under the charge of Raja Sher Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh portrayed Sikhs as aristocrats and lovers. The Lahore painters undertook the portraits of Ranjit Singh and his courtiers. Kehar Singh painted 40 water colour miniatures. Schoefft, a Hungarian artist, drew sketches of the Golden temple in the days of Raja Sher Singh. Between the fall of the Sikh empire and the twenties of the present century flourished Sikh painters like *Kishan* Singh of Kapurthala, Bishan Singh of Amritsar and Kapur Singh.

Sikh painting is primarily an art of portraiture. It deals with historical characters and historical events. Sikh portraiture developed from their political struggle and it is by realising the roles which certain individuals played that we can understand their significance in painting.

One of the oustanding painters was Amrita Shergill (1913—41). Giani Gian Singh did a good deal of fresco-painting on the inner walls and arches of the Golden temple. His work in human, religious, floral and zoological motifs may be seen on the roof and corriodors of the temple. His technique is called *Mohra Qashi.*

Among contemporary painters, S. G. Thakur Singh and Sobha Singh are quite prominent. S. Kirpal Singh has executed a number of large canvas paintings for the S.G.P.C. He has dealt particularly with themes of persecution of the Sikhs by the Mughal Government in 17th and 18th centuries. An exhibition of paintings of Guru Nanak

was held in November, 1965, at Delhi, by the "1969 Group." Mr. W. G. Archer has given about 119 plates in his recent book on paintings of the Sikhs.

89. Give a brief history of the Golden Temple.

Guru Ramdas wanted to give the Sikhs a central place of worship. For this reason he founded a township, called after his name in 1577. In 1589, Guru Arjan requested a Muslim divine named Mian Mir, to lay the foundation of the Sikh temple. This is known as *Har Mandar*—the Lord's Abode—popularly called the Golden Temple. The temple is an example of religious emotion concretised on marble, glass, colour and golden metal. The shrine is encircled by a beautiful artificial lake : the pool of nectar. The reflections of the temple building in the water strikingly express the artistic beauty of the structure.

The other temple called *Akal Takht* was built in 1609 by Guru Hargobind for larger congregations and special celebrations.

The Muslim Governor of Lahore took possession of the temple in 1736. Bhai Mani Singh's attempt to hold a special *Diwali Diwan* in the Temple in 1768 proved unsuccessful and cost him his life. Lakhpat Rai, the commander of Mughal forces, occupied Amritsar in 1741.

Ahmed Shah Durrani attacked Amritsar on 10th April, 1762. He damaged the temple and desecrated the tank. The Sikhs avenged the sacrilege by attacking the rear of his army.

The architecture of the Golden Temple is an outstanding specimen of Sikh architecture which is neither Hindu nor Muslim. Its style contains adaptation of Moghul design, combined with elaborations. Among its typical features are "the multiplicity of *Chattris* or Kiosks which

ornament the parapets, angles and every prominence and projection, the invariable use of the fluted dome, generally covered with copper gilded with gold or brass, the frequent introduction of oriel or embowed windows with shallow elliptical cornices supported on brackets and the enrichment of all arches by means of numerous foliations." Moreover, the inner walls are coverd with fresco-painting in a new techinque called *Mohra Qashi*.

The present temple and its decorations are the work of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He donated many precious articles. The Golden Temple came under popular control in 1920. The broadening of the *Parkarma* and the development of the Central Sikh Museum have added to the attractions of the Temple. The desilting of the tank was done in 1973.

90. What do you know of the Chief Khalsa Diwan ?

As early as 1873 a movement was started in the Panjab for protecting the rights of the Sikhs and for maintaining the prestige and purity of the Sikh faith. It was popularly known as *Singh Sabha* movement. It was necessary to have a central organisation to co-ordinate the activities of the local Singh Sabhas A big religious congregation was held on 30th October, 1902, at Amritsar, for this purpose. At this meeting the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* was formed. It was registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860, on the 9th July, 1904. The founder of the Diwan—Sir Sunder Singh Majithia—gathered around him sincere and zealous workers like Bhai Vir Singh, S. Harbans Singh of Attari, S. Trilochan Singh and Principal Jodh Singh.

The aim of the Diwan was four-fold (i) social, economic and moral uplift of the Sikhs, (ii) propagation of the message of Sikhism, (iii) removal of illiteracy, (iv) protec-

tion of the political rights of the Sikhs and the redress of their grievances by constitutional means. The constitution of the Diwan provides for broad-based representation of the four *Takhats*, Singh Sabhas and missionary associations.

The Diwan had considerable success in cultural and educational fields. The educational committee of the Diwan—started in January, 1908—has been holding annual sessions of the All-India Sikh Educational Conference. The Diwan has a large number of educational institutions under its management. The high percentage of literacy among the Sikhs is an off-shoot of the educational effort of the Diwan. It has paid attention to the redress of Sikh grievances and the discrimination against the Sikhs in government services.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan has encouraged the production of Panjabi literature. The Sikh Tract Society was affiliated to the Diwan. It took a leading part in the movements for the emancipation of the *Kirpan* and *Achut Udhar*. It also runs the Central Khalsa Orphanage, Homeopathic Hospital, Khalsa Parcharak Vidyalaya and Khalsa Hospital, Tarn Taran. In view of its past record, the Diwan can look forward to a spell of useful service of the Panth.

91. What do you know of the Gurdwara Reform movement ?

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Sikhs felt the need of capturing the glory of the Sikh faith by following its traditions. The Singh Sabha Movement had earlier prepared the ground for a revival of the Sikh faith. Many of old and historical Gurdwaras were under the control of the *Mahants* the professional priests. They used the offerings and income for their personal use. The

aim of the Gurdwara Reform Movement—*Akali Lahar*—was to liberate the Gurdwaras from the arbitrary control of *Mahants* and to bring them under popular control. The Government and vested interest were against this popular movement. So the Sikhs had to face lots of hardships and undergo terrible sufferings for improving the admistration of religious shrines.

This popular movement gathered momentum with the *Parchar* of the Akalis. Moreover, the democratic principles of Sikh religion, the extravagance and immorality of the *Mahants*, the need for removal of untouchability and the utilisation of Gurdwara funds for educational and charitable purposes were responsible for its mass-appeal.

Perhaps, the first incident which focused public attention on the improvement of Gurdwaras was the famous Rakabganj case in 1914. The Government had demolished a part of the wall for purpose of road-making. The Sikhs started an agitation and ultimately the government had to yield to public opinion.

The establishment of the Sikh League in 1919 helped the Gurdwara reform movement. The Sikhs non-co-operated with the Government. They demanded popular control of the Golden Temple and the Khalsa College, Amritsar. The Government transferred the management of the Khalsa College to a Sikh managing committee. The Sikh conference held at Amritsar in 1920 appointed a Committee for the management of Sikh temples.

The tragedies of *Nankana Sahab* (1921), *Panja Sahab*, *Guruka-bagh* and *Jaito* brought untold miseries to the Sikhs. Ultimately the Panjab Government acceded to the demand, and passed the Sikh Gurdwara Act on 6th July, 1925 bringing Sikh temples under the control of elected representatives.

92. What do you know of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee ?

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee populary known as the SGPC—is a statutory body constituted under an Act of the Punjab Legislature. It is invested with certain functions regarding the administration of Gurdwaras, educational programmes and the propagation of the Sikh faith. *Its Dharam Parchar Committee* is specifically meant for the publication of literature on Sikhism. It has produced a number of books and tracts on Sikhism in English and modern Indian languages.

The SGPC controls the Golden Temple, the *Langar* attached to it, Guru Ramdas Nivas and Guru Ramdas Hospital Amritsar. It also manages the Khalsa College, Bombay, Mata Gujri College, Fatehgarh Sahab, Bhupindra Khalsa High School, Moga, Shri Guru Ramdas Khalsa High School, Amtrisar and Guru Nanak Girls Higher Secondary School, Amritsar. It runs the Shahid Sikh Missions at Aligarh, Burhanpur and Hapur. In addition, the SGPC employs teams of *Ragis* and missionaries for propagation of Sikh faith in the Punjab and U.P. It also looks after the interests of Sikh farmers who have settled in Ganganagar (Rajasthan) and Terai (U.P.).

The SGPC awards divinity scholarships to students who win top positions in a competitive examination held every year. It provides teams and aid for *Amrit Parchar*. It has recently established a Central Sikh Museum where heir-looms, old manuscripts and paintings are displayed. The Central Sikh Ithas Research Board is one of its main departments. It also maintains a research and reference library on Sikh history.

Recently the SGPC lent its support to the movement for the formation of a Punjabi State on linguistic basis. The Central Government agreed to the linguistic division of the Punjab and the new Punjab State was thus formed in November 1966.

93. What is the contribution of the Sikhs to the struggle for India's independence ?

The part played by the Sikhs in overthrowing the British rule was significant. Recently it has been established that the first and second Sikh Wars were fought to prevent the British aggression on the Punjab.

After the fall of the Punjab, the Sikhs felt a nostalgia for the glories and achievements of the Sikh rule of Ranjit Singh. As early as 1860, Baba Ram Singh, leader of Kuka or Namdhari movement, raised the banner of revolt against the British regime. Ram Singh was deported to Rangoon where he died in 1885. More than 66 of his followers were blown away from the guns in 1872 without any trial.

In January, 1909, Indian leaders held a public meeting in Caxton Hall, London, to celebrate the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh. There it was proclaimed that Sikhs all over the world should start an agitation for the liberation of India. In response to this clarion call, the Sikhs who had settled in foreign countries decided to continue the freedom struggle. In 1913, more than 200 Indians mostly Sikhs, founded the well-known *Ghadar* Party in Washington to liberate India from the British yoke, by force of arms. Baba Gurdit Singh chartered a Japanese ship called *Kamagata Maru* in 1913 and sailed with about 300 Indian nationals to Vancouver. The passengers were not allowed to disembark on west coast of Canada and were subjected to many hardships. After two months of suffering, the passengers were made to land at Calcutta. Their procession was fired upon and more than 21 Sikhs lost their lives. The remaining Sikhs were arrested and sent to the Punjab.

The Sikhs again bore the brunt of General O' Dyer's persecution. In the *Jallianwallah Bagh* massacre (1919), more than 100 Sikhs lost their lives. The Sikhs took a

leading role in the Indian National Army raised by Subhash Chandra Bose in 1942 for the liberation of India, General Mohan Singh organised the Sikh population of Malaya and took part in the attack on British forces in South East Asia. The Sikhs also took an active part in Quit India movement in 1942. It is therefore, correct to say that the contribution of the Sikhs to freedom struggle has been substantial and significant.

V. Sacred Literature

94. What is Gurbani ?

The sacred literature of Sikhism is called *Gurbani* which means the Guru's word—song message—as enshrined in Guru Granth. In Sikhism, the Guru means the *word* and not the physical body. God revealed the *bani* through the Guru and it will utimately lead to its source. The *bani* is the Guru and the Guru is the *bani*. One who expounds or explains the *bani* cannot have the status of a Guru. He is a mere teacher or missionary. Any compositions other than those of the Gurus are unacceptable to the Sikhs.

Some people make much of the apparently contradictory statements in Gurbani. The hymns have been written to suit the different stages in spiritual development. For example, in one hymn, Guru Nanak says that with individual effort, it is possible to realise God ; in another hymn he says that austerities and meditation will not avail without God's grace. With understanding and patience, it is possible to reconcile the so-called contradictions. In this instance, prayer in the beginning is due to personal effort, but later on, it is realised that even this effort has been induced or assisted by God. Without His order—*Hukam*—it is inconceivable for man to do anything. Moreover, sheer effort may produce egoism and even frustration. Humility is essential for winning God's grace.

The reading of Gurbani requires concentration and heart searching. Mere lip-utterance is of no avail. The devotee must meditate on the message of Gurbani. This

will help him in ridding his mind of evil thoughts and making it pure enough to receive the Name. The true devotee drinks this nectar because it gives him real satisfaction and inner peace. The percolation of Gurbani into the inner consciousness is as fruitful as the seasonal rain on a ploughed farm. Guru Nanak says, "Make a boat of the sacred name and with the oars of faith cross this ocean of illusion."

According to Sikhism, Gurbani is the panacea for all human ills and sins. It is for the individual to find out which hymn or *Salok* appeals to him and is related to his spiritual need. If he feels comforted with hymns of *Bhagti*, he should realise that meditation is his spiritual need.

95. What do you know of Guru Granth Sahab ?

Guru Arjan compiled the *Adi Granth* popularly known as the Granth which contains the hymns of the first five Gurus and some *Bhagats* of medieval India. He installed this scripture at Har Mandar in 1604. This copy got into the hands of Dhirmal, the son of Guru Har Gobind. Subsequently some Sikhs forcibly obtained the copy from Dhirmal and presented it to Guru Tegh Bahadur. He returned it to Dhirmal. Guru Gobind Singh dictated the entire *Granth* to Bhai Mani Singh incorporating therein the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1706 at Damdama Sahab. At the time of his death, Guru Gobind Singh conferred permanent Gurudom on Guru Granth, in 1708.

Guru Granth contains 5894 hymns. The largest number of hymns (2216) have been contributed by Guru Arjan. 937 hymns of fifteen *Bhagats* and seventeen *Bhats* whose compositions tallied with the gospel of Sikhism were also included. Here the Hindu and the Muslim, the Brahman and the untouchable meet on an equal footing. From the

linguistic point of view, it is a treasury of old "Hindvi" dialects.

Music forms the basis of the classfiication of the hymns. They follow a definite metrical system. The total number of Ragas is 31. Under each *Raga*, the hymns are arranged thus : *Chaupadas, Ashtapadas*, long poems, *Chhands*, short hymns, *Vars* and poems of *Bhagats*. The ordinary edition in Panjabi contains 1430 pages.

Guru Arjan commented on the nature of the *Granth* thus : "In this dish are placed three things : Truth, Harmony and Wisdom. These are seasoned with the Name of God which is the basis of all; whoever eats it and relishes it shall be saved." It is a work of divine inspiration. It is both metaphysics and ethics, reality and imagination, mysticism and philosophy. According to Prof. Puran Singh, it is "the scripture of all nations. for it is the lyric of divine love, and all the people of the earth subsist on such glowing lyrical power. Guru Granth is but one Song, one Idea and one Life." Guru Arjan wanted that the book be translated into foreign languages because it is the scripture of universal religion. It is a unique treasure, a noble heritage of all mankind.

96. What do you know of the Dasam Granth ?

Guru Gobind Singh was not only an exceptional warrior but also a creative genius. His scholarship in Persian, Hindi and Panjabi enabled him to write verses in different poetic forms. He patronised fifty-two poets at his court. The most important of them were Bhai Nandlal Goya and Sainapat.

The Dasam Granth compiled by Bhai Mani Singh, after Guru Gobind Singh's death, contains more than 1700 verses in Brij Bhasha, Persian, and Panjabi. The

contents are mythological, philosophical and autobiographical. The two main themes of the Guru's works—authentically ascribed to him—are praise of the Almighty and the power of the sword. The verses were meant to stir the people of the time with patriotic and martial fervour. The following compositions are definitely written by the tenth Guru.

Jaap Sahab : It is a unique composition in a variety of metres, praising the characteristics and power of God.

Bachitra Natak : This wonderful drama is an intimate autobiography recounting the mission of the Guru.

Akal Ustat, Shabad Hazare, Swayya, Tatees : These hymns enshrine the praise of the Timeless One in telling phrases and striking similes. Here is an example :

"As waves beating on the shingle,

Go back and in the ocean mingle,

So from God come all things under the sun,

And to God return when their race is run".

Zafar-Nama : This poetic epistle in Persian was addressed to Emperor Aurangzeb and throws light on the Guru's opposition to tyranny and fanaticism.

What impresses one in the Dasam Granth is the excellence of poetic technique and the choice of words and epithets. Guru Gobind Singh—even when the situation appeared desperate after his leaving Anandpur—never at all doubted his victory and maintained his unflinching faith in God :

"But with Thee I will in adversity dwell,
Without Thee, life of ease is life in hell."

The versatility of this saint-soldier in composing devotional verses shows the richness of his mind and his spiritual attainment and heroic grandeur.

97. What is the literary value of the poetry of the Gurus ?

Apart from its mysticism and spiritual depth, the poetry of the Gurus throws light on the contemporary situation. It lays bare the corruption and degradation of the society of the time and stresses the need of social reform and economic uplift. Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh commended a just and humane administration to the then rulers of India.

The hymns of the first five Gurus, the ninth and tenth Gurus show an admirable use of figures of speech, apart from their metrical richness and sweetness. Imagery is used to simplify the subtle thoughts and profound concept. The images have been taken from everyday life and common occurrences. The Gurus were keen lovers of nature and as such have written glowing descriptions of panoramic beauty and the change of seasons. Guru Nanak in *Barah Mah* (The Twelve Months) compares the monthly moods of nature to the inner conditions of man. The *Arti* is full of wonders of the skyscape :

"In the salver of the sky,
Sun and Moon are the lamps.
The luminous stars are the pearls."

Spiritual truths are conveyed through homely similes :

"Just as there is fragrance in the flower,
Reflection in the mirror,
Similarly God lives within,
Search Him in this heart !"

"The sun is the same, the seasons are many,
Many are the garbs of the Creator, saith Nanak."

The Gurus used current proverbs and popular sayings to illustrate fundamental ideas of spirituality :

"As is the dream of the night, so is the world."

"As is the staff in the hand of a blind person,
So is to us the Name of God."

There is, however, no deliberate attempt to refine or embellish the language. Sublimity and idealism have been presented with such simplicity that even an unlettered person can understand their import. The hymns satisfy the longing for perfection and spiritual attainment. The poetry of the Gurus is valuable both for its sublime content and literary excellence.

98. Give the substance of the Japji.

The *Japji* is the epitome of Sikh religion and philosophy. The theme—development of spiritual life—is handled here systematically.

As a first step, Guru Nanak defines God and sums up His attributes. The goal of human life is union with the Divine Being often called salvation or *Nirvana*. This is possible by self-surrender and submission to *Hukam*. God is manifest in his creation. Nature obeys His law; man like-wise must obey the Divine law.

How can a devotee merge in Divinity ? Guru Nanak suggests that in the early hours of the morning, the devotee must meditate on His Name and praise His greatness. The disciple must follow the Guru's word. The first step is the listening of the Name. By careful listening, the devotee becomes free from sorrow and sin. The second step is true and firm belief in the Name. Those who have firm faith in the Name not only get free from the cycle of birth and death but also liberate others. Creation is a play of God. Some people are busy in good works, while others are busy in crime and sin. Action is followed by reaction. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

The sovereign remedy is the remembrance of God. Just as dirty clothes are cleaned by soap, in the same way, man's evil is washed away by the Name. God is vast and

so is His universe. Religious leaders have failed to fathom His greatness. He has created millions of worlds and stars. No one can visualise His infinitude. He alone knows Himself. He guides and controls the universe and all gods and goddesses are under His law. The conquest of the ego or the control of the 'self' is the only way to merge the individual soul into the Universal soul.

There are five stages of spiritual life : *Dharam Khand*, *Gian Khand*, *Saram Khand*, *Karam Khand* and *Sach Khand*. The disciple has to follow a rigid discipline, namely control over mind and body, fearlessness, steady perseverence and constant remembrance of the Name in order to reach the goal. The true devotees have radiant faces, beaming with Divine Light and they bring peace and happiness to countless men and women.

99. Give the substance of Asa-di-var.

Guru Nanak's *Asa-di-var* or the morning prayer consists of *Salokas* and 24 *Paudis*. Guru Ram Das added 24 *Chhands* (Quatrains). A *var* or ode is a heroic measure, popular in the Panjab. This *var* is sung early morning in every Sikh Temple. Here Guru Nanak sings of the glory of God and the Name. He details the process by which an ordinary man can become a prefect servant of God. Even so, God's grace is essential, and one has to deserve it ;

> "God Himself shapes men as vessels, and brings them to perfection. In some is put the milk of loving kindness, others are ever set on the fire of passion. Some lie down to sleep on cushions, others stand to watch over them. God regenerates those on whom He looks with grace."

Hurdles on the path of divinity like ego, hypocrisy,

evil thoughts and actions are dilated upon and remedies suggested.

According to Prof. Tej Singh, "Asa-di-var resembles somewhat the ancient choral ode in Greek. There is a great similarity in the way both *var* & ode are sung." It may be noted that there are 22 *vars* in the *Granth*, out of which three—including *Asa-di-var*—are by Guru Nanak. Often *Shabads* are interspersed between *Paudis* and this provides both variation of musical score and change of thought content.

Krishna Chaitanya, an Indian musicologist writes about the effect of the chant of *Asa-di-var* as under :

> "In musical impact it is like the plaint-chant of European Christianity. It is recitative which has taken wings, rather than abstract arabesque of sound. But in musical texture, it is wholly different from plaint-chant. This is because plaint-chant comes early in the evolution of European music, whereas the melodic pattern of the *Asa-di var* is derived by simplification from a mature classical tradition."

We understand the message and feel the melody at the same time. *Asa-di-var* sung before dawn—*Amrit Vela*—produces a feeling of inner satisfaction and peace.

Gramophone records of *Asa-di-var* are availabe in the market. The most popular is that of the late Surjan Singh.

100. Give the substance of Sukhmani.

Sukhmani is easily the simplest and most popular of the *Banis* of the *Adi Granth.* Literally, "Sukhmani" means something which gives peace of mind or the touchstone of happiness. Guru Arjan's aim in writing the *Sukhmani*—The Psalm of Peace—was that the reader may feel composure of mind and a sense of inner satisfaction.

A man who is fed up with life or depressed by anxiety and affliction will derive real consolation from it.

There is a gradual development of thought in the twenty-four cantos of *Sukhmani* In the first three cantos, Guru Arjan mentions the advantages of the practice of *Nam*, the remembrance of the Name. *Simaran* is linking up with the divine in a spirit of surrender, devotion and love. The Name helps in the normal business of life, and paves the way for spiritual progress. In cantos four to eleven, Guru Arjan gives his views on the God-man. Man's potentialities can be strengthened by divine grace. Man gets a vision of God through the company of holy men. The God-man is not the *vaishnavite*, or the salvationist or the touch-nothing mystic. He is one who has fulfilled the duties of a normal life: "The God-enlightened men's lives like the lotus, pure amidst impurities of the world."All the seekers, at one stage or another, seek God's help and turn to Him for strength and guidance. Cantos twelve to twenty mention the process by which God's grace can be merited. Self-conceit and slander of saints bring their own punishment. Only by self surrender, can one earn God's favour. God is truth and the Guru guides the lives of the disciples in righteous living. The Guru also inspires the devotees with the love of the Name.

The last four cantos contain Guru Arjan's exposition of the Name. The Name covers both the personal and impersonal aspect of God. God transcends and unifies all creation. The singing of the name gives man spiritual solace and inner peace. In the end, the Guru enumerates the rewards which the reading of *Sukhmani* brings to the readers. They are beauty, humility. wisdom, equanimity and God-realisation.

GLOSSARY

Amrit : Water of immortality ; this term is applied to the baptism-ceremony of the Sikhs.
Ardas : Prayer, here Sikh supplication.
Atma : The self, the spirit, the soul.
Avtar : Incarnation, rebirth.
Bhagat : Saint, holy man.
Brahmgiani : God-illumined soul, a man who has realised God.
Chitt : Mind-stuff, heart.
Darshan : Vision of divine light, a system of philosophy.
Daswand : One-tenth of income, donated by Sikhs for charitable purposes.
Daya : Mercy, compassion.
Dharam : Righteousness, duty, religion.
Dhyan : Concentration, meditation.
Gunas : Basic attributes, three in number.
Grahsta : The life of a householder.
Gurbani : The utterance of the Teacher, here hymns in the Granth.
Gurmat : Philosophy or teaching of the Gurus.
Gurmukh : Saint, one who follows the Guru's teaching.
Gurdwara : Guru's door, a Sikh temple.
Hukam : Command, Will of God.
Jiva : The soul.
Kam : Sex, lust.
Karma : Law of action and reaction.
Khalsa : Pure, enlightened, the organisation founded by the tenth Guru.
Kirodh : Anger.
Kirtan : Singing of the praises of God.

Lavan : Marriage hymns.
Lobh : Greed, avarice.
Manmukh : Self-willed, irreligious person.
Massands : Professional priests.
Maya : World stuff, illusion.
Missal : Community or group of persons.
Moh : Attachment.
Mukti (Moksha) : Liberation, salvation.
Nam : Divine Name, the Word, the spirit of God.
Panth : Path of life, the community of Sikhs.
Parchar : Missionary work.
Raga : An Indian musical motif or score.
Raj yoga : Spiritual Union in worldly glory.
Sadhana : Spiritual effort, right action.
Samadhi : State of contemplation, merger in the Infinite.
Sahaj yoga : Natural serenity obtained by spiritual union or perfection.
Sanyasa : Asceticism, Renunciation of the world.
Satsang : Holy company, prayer-meeting.
Shabad : The word of God, hymn.
Shakti : Cosmic energy, nature, God's power.
Sidh : Hermit, Yogi of Gorakh cult.
Siddhis : Occult powers.
Simaran : Meditation, constant remembrance of God.
Turya : The fourth stage, highest spiritual state.
Vairag : Distaste for worldly things,
Veda : Sacred scriptures of the Hindus.
Wahguru : The wonderful Lord, the holy word of the Sikhs.
Wismad : Feeling of wonder, ecstasy.
Yoga : Union with God, occult practices.

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